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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

HENRY KOLLOCK, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SAVANNAH.

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RICHARD M. STITES, Clerk.

TO MY

BELOVED CONGREGATION IN SAVANNAH,

THESE SERMONS

ARE DEDICATED,

AS A SMALL TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

FOR THAT UNIFORM

KINDNESS AND BENEVOLENCE,

WHICH THEY HAVE EVER DISPLAYED

TO THEIR ATTACHED PASTOR,

HENRY KOLLOCK.

PREFACE.

THE ensuing Sermons were written without the remotest thought of publication. They have been printed amidst the pressure of parochial occupations, which almost prevented even a revision of them. They are now cast as a small mite into the treasury of God. The numberless defects in them I fully perceive; and in looking over them, I humble myself before God that I have not more earnestly warned the impenitent and more zealously animated the believer. If there are any errors in doctrine, they are involuntary, and I trust the Lord will forgive them. Reader, instead of criticising, unite with me in praying that these discourses may be blessed to your soul and mine,

H. K.

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SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

EPHESIANS vi. 4.

"*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*"

WHEN in any churches where pure religion has once flourished, we behold corrupt manners and licentious sentiments, a diminution in the zeal and number of the disciples of Jesus, and an augmentation of the votaries of vanity and sin; we shall generally find that this lamentable degeneracy has been caused in a great degree by a neglect of christian education. If in such places we would wish to restore the holiness and fervour of former times, perhaps no single mean can be employed, that is so efficacious, as a strict and faithful regard to this duty.

A subject of such consequence deserves our serious consideration. Favour us then with your attention while we enquire,

I. What is implied in a christian education; and

II. What are those motives which should excite parents to bestow it upon their children.

The nature of this duty, and the inducements which should urge us to comply with it, form then the whole division of the ensuing discourse.

I. What then is implied in a christian education? What is that duty to which St. Paul exhorts parents, when he charges them "not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" This christian education, this sacred duty, includes these four things—*wise discipline*, *salutary instruction*, *holy example*, *fervent prayer*.

1. *A wise discipline* is essential to a christian education. In vain will you hope to lead your children in the ways of piety, if you do not begin while they are yet young, to exercise over them a strict but affectionate discipline; if you do not teach them from the very cradle, that instead of acting according to their own wayward fancies, they are to be regulated by the will of God, and their parents.—Give the reins to their inclinations, suffer them to act as they please, let them have no other restraint than their own wishes and desires, and they are in the direct road to misery, to vice, and to perdition; they will perhaps live to curse that weak fondness, which strengthened vicious habits and plunged them into guilt—to execrate those criminal com-

pliances which have laid the foundation of their unhappiness, by cherishing furious passions, and incapacitating them to bear with disappointment.—Govern them then with a firm and steady hand. Begin to bend the twig while it is yet flexible; in a few years it will become a sturdy oak and resist all your efforts. The vicious propensities of children, the fruit of their original corruption, are early to be discerned. On their first appearance, endeavour to extirpate them, and exercise your authority to prevent the formation of criminal habits. Keep a watch over their tongues. Do not like so many injudicious parents, encourage lying or ill-nature, by smiling at a false or malignant expression, if it have some degree of smartness. Do not nourish their pride by excessive commendation and flattery, by loading them with pageantry and gorgeous ornaments. Do not cultivate their revenge by teaching them to direct their feeble yet malicious strokes, against the persons or things that have injured them. Do not inspire a relentless and tyrannical disposition, by permitting them to torture various species of animals. Do not encourage a worldly spirit, by continually proposing the riches or honours of earth, as the recompence which they may expect for their goodness, while the favour of God is scarcely ever mentioned as an object worthy to be aspired after. Do not suffer them to be exposed to unnecessary temptations, which, while their judgement is immature and their reason without the aids of expe-

rience, will almost inevitably plunge them into sin. But on the contrary, by a steady exercise of discipline, accustom them to the utmost sincerity, justice, and benevolence in their intercourse with their companions. Habituate them to controul their passions and wishes. Accustom them to value time, and to flee from indolence, that canker of virtue and destroyer of the soul. Teach them to be modest, to be humble, and exemplary in their deportment; to reverence the ordinances and institutions of religion; and to pray constantly to their Heavenly Father. Thus strive, by an unintermitted course of discipline, to implant virtuous habits, to prevent Satan from gaining new authority in their souls, and to regulate their outward conduct; and you have great ground to hope that whilst you are thus employed, God will shed down his Holy Spirit to bless your exertions, and to change the hearts of your offspring.

When I speak of the necessity of discipline, I am not recommending an inhuman severity. This will "provoke them to wrath," and irritate instead of reforming them. Let your government be like that of our Father in heaven; mild, gentle, affectionate, springing from love and exercised in mercy; yet not weakly with-holding reproof and chastisement when they are necessary. In inflicting this punishment, however, be careful to make your children feel that you do it in the name of God, from a

hatred of sin, and for their good. Be firm, but not furious—let your eye melt with sorrow, but not sparkle with rage—let your tongue express your regret and pity, but not pour out bitter and passionate reproaches. If your children perceive that you are influenced by passion, and not by reason and religion, your authority will become odious or contemptible.

Let your discipline be just and equal; make no invidious distinctions between your children; indulge no partial affection for one child in preference to another equally deserving. Let punishment be proportioned to faults; punish those sins that are immediately against God, more severely than those that are against you. Let wilful and habitual vices be treated with greater severity, than those that are more unintentional and rare. Preserve this family-justice, or your punishments will harden instead of amending your children.

Finally, study carefully the tempers of your children, and diversify your discipline according to the diversity of their tempers. Let it be more mild or rigorous, according as the gentleness or stubbornness of their dispositions requires one or the other of these modes of treatment.

This is the first thing that is included in a christian education; a wise discipline.

2. A christian education, requires the diligent *instruction* of children in the principles of our holy religion. It is possible that a person may know the doctrines of christianity and yet be unholy; but it is impossible that he should be entirely ignorant of them, and yet be holy. The illumination of the mind, always must and does precede the sanctification of the heart. Be careful then to give your offspring that knowledge and information which they must have, before they can understandingly embrace the offers of salvation, and become the children of God; and if in discharging this duty you are animated by proper motives, you have reason to hope for the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit to bring them "from darknes into marvellous light." And even though this great effect should not immediately be produced, yet still your labours are not in vain. That religious knowledge, with which you store their minds, will be a powerful guard against temptation, a strong incentive to duty, a mean which God may hereafter employ for their conversion. Though they now neglect your instructions, yet they will not be able entirely to efface them. They may hereafter be forcibly brought to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost, and produce a saving conversion. It is a just observation of a pious and judicious writer,* that "conversions in advanced life are most commonly

* Doctor WITHERSPOON.

the resurrection of those seeds which were sown in infancy, but had long been stifled by the violence of youthful passions, or the pursuits of ambition, and the hurry of an active life."

Parents, it is not left to your choice whether or not you will afford this instruction to your children. God in innumerable places enjoins it upon you. "These my words ye shall teach unto your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."† "God hath established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."‡

If then, you would "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," you must afford them religious instructions before their minds are pre-occupied by errors and prejudices. Early teach them their miserable and corrupted state by nature. When their little limbs are afflicted with pain, when sorrow forces tears from their eyes, when any distress assails them; tell them that this

† Deuteronomy xi. 18, 19. ‡ Psalms lxxviii. 5, 4, 7.

pain, this sorrow, this distress, are the fruits and the chastisements of sin. Tell them how odious this sin is to God, point them to the flames of the abyss which it has kindled. Reveal to them also the abounding grace of God; shew them how he has given us his Son to save us from hell, and raise us to glory; and declare to them the splendours of that crown which he will give to all that love and serve him. Let these and similar truths be proposed to them in their tenderest years; not as subjects of discussion but as historic facts; not as points that they are immediately to examine and understand; but as the testimony of God which is to be received by them with full belief.

Be careful that in this first period of their life, you do not give them a disgust to religion, by inculcating it in a gloomy and injudicious manner. Proportion your instructions to their capacities. In their earliest years they will be unable to understand your abstract reasonings or your subtle explications of doctrinal points. By forcing them frequently to attend to these reasonings and explanations, at that period when your words are to them unintelligible sounds which excite no clear ideas, you render piety dry and wearisome; you make it a task and a burden, from which they rejoice to be released. Leave then this mode of instruction till they are able to comprehend you; and begin by recounting to them those interesting histories on

which our religion is founded, and which are level to the weakest capacities. If you would give them striking ideas of the greatness, the mercy, and justice of God, do not enter into a laboured philosophical discussion, but relate to them some of the impressive events which illustrate these perfections. If you would give them a just representation of virtue, and an inclination to practice it, enter into no toilsome analysis, but present to them some touching incidents in the lives of the saints. Dwell frequently on the actions of our divine Saviour, on his birth, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection and ascension. This picture will display, infinitely better than all your profound reasoning, the holiness and tender mercies of God; this will be the most perfect and admirable model of obedience to God, of charity to a guilty world, of humility, of self-denial, of resignation, of magnanimity under sufferings and persecutions. These histories properly related will awaken the attention and feeling of your offspring, and will make the profoundest impression upon their mind and heart. You will behold them moved even to tears; their little hearts will glow with gratitude and love; their tongues will lisp forth the praises of their gracious Creator and blessed Saviour; and their feeble hands be lifted up to the throne of their heavenly friend.

As the understandings of your children are developed, and as their minds expand, teach them or

cause them to be taught, the proofs of those sentiments which they had received as facts, revealed by God, and the doctrines which grow out of those histories in which they have been instructed..... Teach them or cause them to be taught, the reasons why we receive our religion as divine; and shew them how superficial and ungrounded, are the objections of its adversaries. Teach them or cause them to be taught, the high and sublime doctrines of this religion; shew them that though the utmost penetration of the human mind cannot fully comprehend or explain many of these doctrines, yet nevertheless, the utmost subtlety of the human mind cannot find any thing in them contradictory to reason. Teach them or cause them to be taught, what are the particular tenets embraced by that communion in which they were born, and the reasons which lead you to suppose that they are the tenets inculcated by the word of God. In one word, instruct them in every thing that is connected with christianity, so that they may be ready to "give a reason of the hope that is in them."

Thus educated, they will be able to enter the world with little danger of being seduced into error; they will be able to repel the assaults of the infidel and the fallacies of the enthusiast; they will, by the blessing of God, become firm and rational believers, and pillars of the church.

Ah! my brethren, is this the manner in which you educate your children? Do you not strive more to teach them how to attain to opulence and dignity in the world, than how to obtain the heavenly inheritance? Do you not instruct them in almost every other science with greater care, than in the science of salvation? You spare no pains or expence, that your sons may be made acquainted with languages, arts, or professions; and can you be indifferent, in the mean time, whether they speak the language of heaven or hell; whether or not they are initiated in the art of holy living; whether they have the profession of a christian soldier, or a slave of satan? You instruct your daughters in the regulation of domestic economy, or in the gayer and more light accomplishments of the age. Ah! while they are so "careful about many things," why will you not teach them that "one thing is needful:" Why will you not shew them how to obtain that greatest and most solid of accomplishments, the image of God, the impress of heaven? This is the second thing that is included in a christian education: Salutary Instruction.

3. In a christian education, it is necessary for parents to illustrate their precepts by *personal example*. Example has at all times an astonishing influence upon us; but in our early years, when we have no fixed habits, when we are incapable of discerning the intrinsic propriety of actions, we are formed

almost entirely by imitation. This is our preceptor before we can reason, nay, before we can speak. If your own practice be inconsistent with religion, the remonstrances of conscience will prevent you from faithfully reproving in your children, those vices of which you are guilty; and a wish to palliate your own corruptions, will hinder you from advising them with impartiality. And even if this effect be not produced, even if your reproofs be faithful, and your advices impartial, yet while your conduct contradicts them, you induce your offspring to question the sincerity of your assertions, or to doubt of the possibility of complying with your directions; you lead them to suppose that religion consists, not in a steady and uniform practice of its duties, but in frequently conversing of its doctrines and obligations. While your language and life are thus contradictory, as a Scotch divine forcibly observes, "you point them with your finger on the road to heaven; you take them by the hand, and lead them to that of hell." No, no! miserable mother; you may give your children the most wise and pious instructions, but you have no reason to hope that these instructions will be blest, while your whole behaviour proves that you despise and scorn them. What though you tell your offspring that God is supremely to be loved, that the salvation of their soul should be their chief concern, will they not esteem these teachings to be unmeaning and hypocritical cant, whilst they see you careless of God, neglectful of

the concerns of your soul, inordinately attached to the world, and pursuing with shameful avidity, its vanities, its pleasures, and its riches? No, no wretched father, whilst you are profane, licentious, immoral, neglectful of family prayer or private devotion, you need not expect that your cold advices will lead your children to holiness and to God. Deriving their character from surrounding objects, they will not fail to imitate you to whom they are so strictly united, whom from motives so various, they are led to resemble. They will not long resist the seductions of vice, when you go before them in iniquity, and tempt them to plunge into the fearful abyss. This is the third thing that is included in a christian education—Holy Example.

4. Finally, all your exertions will be in vain, unless you frequently *pray* to God for his direction, assistance and blessing. So many virtues are requisite for the proper discharge of this duty, that if we rely upon our own sufficiency, we shall certainly fail. We shall relax in that prudence, that diligence, that affection, without which our labours will be useless. And even though this were not the case, even though we could do every thing that we ought to do, without calling down God to our aid ; yet still in vain should we plant and water, except he gave the increase ; and he has not engaged to give it to us, except as an answer to our prayers. Frequently then pour out your petitions to that God who pitieth us

as a father pitieth his children ; and who alone "maketh wise the simple." Beseech him to teach you how to discharge your duty to your children, and to "direct the hearts of your children in the ways of his laws and the works of his commandments." Do not content yourself with making these supplications in the family and closet; but at particular times take your children apart; tell them the importance and necessity of religion ; tell them how it would cheer your hearts to see them walk in the ways of godliness ; and then in their presence and their behalf, pour out before God the tender and impassioned wishes of your heart, the ardent desires of your affectionate soul.

Thus let your prayers continually ascend: God will answer them in mercy, and you will find that your "labours have not been in vain in the Lord."

This is the last thing included in a christian education—Fervent Prayers.

May the Lord enable you faithfully to perform these duties. Then the blood of your perishing children shall not be required at your hands. (Ezek. iii. 18.) Then you will not be chargeable with the perfidious neglect of the trust and deposite committed to you by God. Then at the decisive day, you shall not be filled with confusion and terror, when Jesus shall demand of you the purchase of his blood.

SERMON II.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

EPHESIANS vi. 4.

"*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*"

IN a previous discourse to you from these words, we proposed,

I. To consider the nature of a christian education, and

II. To examine some of the motives which should induce parents to bestow it upon their children.

In treating the first of these divisions, we shewed that a christian education required, a firm, steady, yet affectionate exercise of discipline; a diligent care to instruct children in those things which it is necessary for christians to know; a holy example confirming our precepts, and fervent prayers for, and with our children.

Parents, it is no easy matter to discharge these

weighty duties. Thus to "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," requires constant care, persevering diligence, unremitted attention. Yet do not, on this account, desist from your labours. The task is difficult, but the motives to enforce it are impressive. We are in the

Second division of our discourse, to present you with a few of these motives.

1. Are you zealous for the prosperity of Zion? Have you any regard for the interests of the Saviour? Be careful then to confer a pious education upon your children. Reflect what you are doing, while you suffer them to grow up in ignorance and in vice. You are preparing them to dishonour God, to wound the hearts of the pious, to strengthen the cause of irreligion. You are preparing them as fit instruments in the hands of satan, to cast reproach upon piety; and to assail the kingdom of the blessed Saviour. Ah! could you with prophetic vision look forward into futurity, what would you behold? You would see that son, whose passions you now suffer to be uncontrolled, whose mind you now suffer to be unstored with religious knowledge; you would see him a hardened sinner, encouraging others in guilt, perhaps scoffing at the name of the Redeemer, and trampling upon his cross. You would see that daughter, whom you educate in carelessness and folly, absorbed by the

vanities of the world, neglectful of God and her soul, a determined opposer to a holy life. Ah! slothful father, hypocritical mother, dare you pretend that you are the friends of Jesus, whilst you are thus careless of advancing his interests; whilst you are educating your offspring to become his enemies. Go, leave the camp of Israel: Fight openly, as you do in reality, under the banner of the adversaries of Jesus Do: not deceitfully pretend that you are submissive to the captain of our salvation, whilst you are secretly strengthening the cause of his enemies.

On the contrary, what an encouragement is it to diligence in this duty to reflect, that through the efficacious grace of God, your labours may be blest, so as to promote the good of the church, and the glory of the Redeemer. That son, over whom you now watch with such anxiety, whose passions you constantly strive to regulate, whose mind you endeavour to inform with the truths of God, whose wants and necessities you unceasingly spread before your heavenly Father, whom you by faith give up, and dedicate to the Lord; this son may, through the divine blessing upon your virtuous exertions, become "a burning and a shining light;" an eminent servant of the Lord, an intrepid soldier of the cross. If he remain a private christian, his example, his instructions, and his prayers, will prove a blessing to his neighbours and friends; will be in-

fluential in "rearing Zion from the dust," and in advancing the glory of the blessed Saviour. If he be called to assume the sacred office, his labours may be blest to the conversion and edification of numerous souls; the blessings of many that were ready to perish, but whom God by him plucked from the burning, and made to exalt his infinite glories and perfections, shall descend upon the head of you, the faithful father or the pious mother, who "brought up this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." "Many a congregation," says pious Baxter, "that is happily fed with the bread of life, may thank God for the endeavours of some poor man or woman, that trained up a child in the ways of God, to become their holy and faithful teacher."

That daughter also over whom you watch with parental fondness and with christian care; in whose breast you early strive to implant holy habits and virtuous desires; whose warm affections and lively passions, you endeavour to direct towards their true objects, the blessed God and compassionate Saviour; whose mind you store with the principles of virtue and religion; for whom your fervent prayers daily rise up before Almighty God; the name of this daughter may be joined with those of the numberless female worthies, who by their mild and gentle persuasions, and their excellent examples, have strengthened the cause of the Redeemer, en-

couraged the saints, and brought sinners to reflection. Her conduct as a child, as a wife, and a mother, may afford a living proof of the excellency of the religion of Christ, and may eminently tend to strengthen his cause. I ask you then again, are you zealous for the prosperity of Zion? Have you any regard for the interests of Jesus? "Bring up your children in his nuture and admonition," that they may be the instruments of glorifying him, and promoting his kingdom in the world.

2. Perhaps there are some of you who feel little affected by this motive; let me then urge you by another consideration. Have you any regard to the public prosperity, to the honor and interest of your country? In order to promote this prosperity, to advance this honour and interest, "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If you leave a pious generation to succeed you, the blessing of God will rest upon the land which they inhabit. Their "righteousness will exalt the nation," (Prov. xiv, 34.) and "no weapon formed against it shall prosper." (Is. liv, 17.) But if, on the contrary, you suffer those who are to take your place in the state when your head is laid in the dust, to grow up in carelessness and irreligion, their "sin will be the reproach of this people:" (Prov. xiv, 34.) their sin will call down the judgments of God upon it. If your offspring be pious, they will discharge the duties that belong to the station which

they shall occupy, in such a manner as to promote the public tranquility and happiness. Acting under the eye of the Judge of all the earth, and in the prospect of that account which they must render unto him, they will, whether as rulers or as subjects, endeavour to promote the public felicity, and to be blessings in their day and generation. But if your offspring have not these restrainsts ; if you have never laboured to inspire them with sincere love to God, and warm charity to man ; if you have never striven to implant in their hearts the sentiments of virtue, and to control the fury of their passions ; is there not cause to fear that they may be the scourges of their country, that they may be regardless of every thing but their own gratification ; that they may be incendiaries, or disturbers of the public peace ? Is there not cause to fear, that the curses of a bleeding country, made unhappy, immediately by their means, but ultimately by you, will pursue you even to the grave ? Do you then love your country, and wish for its prosperity ? Give to your children a pious education ; lay upon them early the restraints of religion ; and then when you lie down in the grave, and they become the rulers, the legislators, and citizens of the nation, they will be animated by proper motives ; they will conscientiously aim at the public weal, and the blessing of God most High, will crown their efforts with success.

3. Do you shudder at the crime of perjury? Do you tremble at the dreadful guilt, the overwhelming punishment of that man, who dares to sport with the solemn sanctions of an oath? Parents, you have bound your souls by a sacred oath; whether you have fulfilled it, the searcher of hearts well knoweth, and all mankind will know in the day of judgement. When you offered your child to God in the holy ordinance of baptism, you then solemnly vowed and swore, that you would bring it up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and you invoked this great God to witness your vow, and to punish the violation of it. Dare you wilfully and habitually violate these obligations? Can you be careless of the pious education of your children, and yet fail to tremble at that vengeance which shall weigh down the perjured soul to deep perdition? When you suffer weeks and months to pass without affording pious instructions and advices to your offspring, without offering your prayers to God, in their presence and in their behalf, without shewing them the example of a holy life; does not conscience sometimes cry to you, "Is it thus that you fulfil your baptismal vow? Is it thus that you perform that solemn oath, taken in the presence of God, of angels, and of men? Is it thus that you execute your engagement to that Lord, who hath recorded your promises in the book of remembrance, and will produce them to you in the day of retribution? Do you then trem-

ble at perjury? Give to your children a pious education, and thus fulfil your oath.

4. Let me urge you to this duty, from a regard to the temporal and eternal welfare of your children. The temporal happiness of your offspring, depends in a great degree upon their pious education. Except their minds are fortified by holy instructions, and their hearts impressed with religious sentiments, they will run heedlessly on in the paths of folly and vice, strangers to those high joys which flow from an approving conscience, from communion with God, and from a foretaste of heaven. And besides all this, there is great danger that they indulge those gross and abominable crimes, which will bring down upon them, not only the vengeance of God, but also the execration of their fellow-men. Unrestrained by sentiments of piety, uncontrolled by a conscience which has never been enlightened; what is to prevent them from being plunged into infamy by their unbridled passions? Examine the registers of guilt, read the lives of those men who by a public execution have expiated for their violation of the laws; do you not find numbers of them cursing their parents for bringing them to this state, by neglecting to give them a pious education? And with respect to the other sex; who are the females whose polluted courses have covered their families with ignominy, and themselves with contempt? Are they not those who were not taught

in youth to reverence the God of purity? And even if your children should all be saved, (as we fervently desire and pray that they all may be saved) from these dreadful excesses, yet still they may, by the habitual indulgence of other sins less odious in themselves, procure for themselves misery and shame. I beseech you to look around you in the world; attend to the lives of those persons who are most loaded with the contempt and the disdain of society. Are they not most generally those who have been sent into the world by their parents unprotected by pious habits and religious precepts? Ye fathers, whose love for your children is warm and disinterested; ye mothers, whose felicity is intimately connected with their happiness, can you be so blind and so cruel to them, as to expose your beloved offspring to so deplorable a state.

But supposing that none of these fears should ever be realized; supposing that your children who are thus neglected by you, should live caressed and applauded by men, the favourites of the world; yet still death will by and bye, approach to them; death, for which you never taught them to prepare; death, which spares not the favorites of earth, which is the entrance into eternal torments for all that are not interested in Jesus Christ. Come then, careless and neglectful parents, who are indulging in your children a thoughtlessness and inattention to the concerns of their souls; come and

let us view your children contending with death; let us see what happiness you have secured for them. Behold them weighed down by infirmities of body, harrassed by anxieties of mind, lashed by the stings of conscience. They look back upon the past with confusion; they tremble to remember "that they glorified not God, in whom their breath was, and whose are all their ways:" (Dan. v, 23.) They cast their eyes towards the future, and see nothing but images of horror. Whilst shuddering and affrighted at beholding the depth of the gulph into which they are about to plunge, they cast looks of reproach and anguish upon you. "Of what avail," they cry to you, "of what avail are now all the riches, the honours, and pleasures of the world, which you were anxious to procure for me; why did you not tell me that a single Christ was better than all earthly friends? Why did you not tell me of the importance of eternal things: I now see all their consequence; but I see it too late. Fool that I was, to be blinded and rendered careless by you: but my self-reproaches are now unavailing; the earth vanishes; the frowning Judge appears; hell opens to receive me."

Thus they die in horror, and driven forever from the presence of God, "lift up their eyes, being in torments." Parents, can any of you be so inhuman, so barbarous, so monstrous, as to neglect your children and prepare for them this fearful doom?

Let me hope better things of you ; let me hope that you will strive to lead them early to God ; be faithful, and God has promised to bless your exertions. Then your children cannot fail to be happy ; they will have the Lord as their friend, their guard, and protector ; and Jesus Christ as their high-priest, their advocate, and redeemer. They will have those true riches which endure for ever ; those durable honours which eternity will not impair ; those ravishing pleasures which flow at God's right hand. In life, they will be honoured and respected by the wise and good : In death, they will be tranquil and serene ; for they will be supported by those sentiments of religion which were early felt by them, and upheld by that Saviour to whom you early directed their thoughts, and their desires. And beyond the grave they shall be ever with the Lord ; ever undefiled by sin, and unassailed by grief. Do you then love your children ? "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;" and thus you will secure for them a happy life, a joyous death, and a triumphant eternity.

5. Finally, do you love yourselves ? Do you wish to obtain the highest pleasures, and avoid the severest pains ? Give your children a pious education. If the blessing of God on your tender care, render your offspring virtuous and holy, what pure delights will you experience. Their amiable and devout conduct will be a cordial to your soul,

amidst the pains and decripitude of years; the applause bestowed upon them, will afford joy to you; they will never slight, disregard, nor dishonour you; but will strive by every grateful and delicate attention, by every expression of filial love, ennobled by religion, to gild the evening of your days. "Happy parent! your years shall be prolonged, not, as it often happens, to see your comforts fall from you one by one, and to become at once old and destitute; but to taste a new pleasure, not to be found among the pleasures of youth, reserved for your age; to reap the harvest of your labours, in the duty, affection, and felicity of your dear children." (Ogden.)

But if on the contrary, you refuse to bring up your children in the fear of the Lord, is there not cause to apprehend that they who are suffered to slight and neglect God, should also slight and neglect you? Is there not cause to apprehend that their passions may lead them into misery and guilt, which will embitter all your pleasures and poison all your enjoyments? Is there not cause to apprehend, that the time may come, when, like unhappy David, you will in vain seek for joy from the pomps and honours of the world, but must sorrowfully retire to your chamber, weeping for the irregularities of your child, and exclaiming in the bitterness of your soul, Oh! Absalom my son, my son?

Remember too, that having lived for a short time in this mortal state, you will at last arrive at its close, and be stretched upon your bed of death. Think what delightful sensations, or what terrible pains, will then be experienced by you, according as you have performed or neglected this duty. Shall you have given your children a pious education, and seen them walking in the paths of truth and godliness, you will then be enabled to leave them without regret, and to bid them farewell with calmness; you will be able to commit them with confidence to the Father of the fatherless, knowing that they shall rest with safety under the shadow of the Almighty. You will be armed against the terrors of the approaching separation, by remembering that you have performed your duty to them, though imperfectly, yet sincerely; and by anticipating that period when you shall again be united before the throne of God. "Though such a parent die," says the wise son of Sirach, "yet he is as though he were not dead; for he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived, he saw and rejoiced in him; and when he died, he was not sorrowful." (Ecclesiasticus xxx. 4, 6.)

Shall you, on the contrary, at the hour of death, be forced to remember that you have neglected your children, and by your carelessness destroyed their souls? Ah! this reflection will kindle a hell in your bosom, will give double terrors to death. "God

gave me children," you will cry in agony: "God gave me children, committed to me the care of their immortal souls, and ordered me to bring them up in his fear. At the period of their baptism, I vowed thus to do; but I have slighted my vows, and forgotten my engagements; I have been careful of their temporal interests, and anxious for their outward welfare, but have been careless of the state of their souls: I have sold them to sin and to satan; I have been the instrument of their perdition; they are lost; but their blood is about to be required at my hands." Parents, are you desirous that these should not be your feelings on the bed of death? Begin then instantly to bring up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Remember, finally, that the day of judgment is approaching: Death shall lay your bodies and the bodies of your children in the dust; but at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, you shall wake from the long slumbers of the grave to receive your final doom. Oh! what joy shall swell the heart of the godly parent, when the voice of the archangel shall cry, arise, thou pious father, thou holy mother; arise and re-embrace those righteous children whom death tore from your arms; arise, open your eyes upon your dear children who closed them when you expired; arise, press to your parental bosom these your descendants whom you early dedicated to God, and educated in his fear; go before them to the

throne of the Judge, and exclaim in humble triumph, "behold us O God, and the children whom thou hast given us." (Isaiah v. 18.)—"Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." (John xvii. 12.) He will give you the crown of righteousness; he will cause you never more to be separated from each other, nor from him.

But, O criminal parent, these joys are not for you—for you are reserved tortures, which the heart in vain attempts to conceive. That son, that daughter, whom you are leading to perdition, will descry you amongst the assembled crowd; as they sink in the flames, they will imprecate the vengeance of God upon your head; they will cry to you in a voice that will rend your heart; "wretched parent! it is you that have brought us hither! it is you who communicated to us a corrupted nature, and were careless of leading us to God, and inspiring us with holy sentiments; wretch! why didst thou call us into being? why didst thou plunge us into hell? our doom is remediless; but we will become thy tormentors! we will forever present ourselves to thee, surrounded by those flames which consume us, weighed down by those chains of darkness with which we are bound; we will cry to thee, *behold thy work!* The groans, the shrieks, the howlings, which we shall through eternity pour forth, will vibrate in thine ear, will reproach thee for our misery and thy guilt, will kindle a hell within thee more in-

tolerable than the flames in which thou shalt be enwrapped."

But I forbear. This picture is too appalling. If the mere anticipation of such a scene freezes the blood, what, oh! what must be its reality!

SERMON III.

EARLY PIETY.

2 CHRONICLES xxxiv. 3.

"*While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.*"

AN earthly panegyrist in giving the character of a celebrated king, would have talked much of the extent of his dominions, the power of his arms, the splendour of his court; but the spirit of God, overlooking these objects as unworthy of attention, mentions as the most glorious characteristic of the king of Judah, that "while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father." How much more honourable to Josiah is this eulogium, than the most brilliant description of his dignities and wealth could have been? His dignities and wealth could not have accompanied him beyond the grave; his palace has long since fallen to the dust; his throne has crumbled to ruins, his crown has lost its lustre: but his early piety has followed him into the unseen world, where he dwells in the palace of the King of kings, seated on a durable

throne, and having his brows encircled by a crown which shall never fade away. My young friends, this palace of God, this throne in the heavens, this crown of immortality, are offered to you as well as to Josiah. His example will teach you in what manner to attain them. Imitate his early piety, and you shall partake of his recompense. Like him, while yet young, seek the God of your fathers, and this God will confer upon you a felicity and honour, infinite in degree, eternal in duration.

My sole design on the present occasion, is to persuade you thus to act, by presenting you with a variety of motives, to induce you early to consecrate yourselves to God:—And do thou, merciful Father, accompany this discourse by the almighty energy of thy spirit, and the omnipotent efficacy of thy grace, so that these youth may be converted from the error of their ways.

From the variety of motives which immediately occur to my mind, I find it difficult to select those that are most impressive. I shall confine myself however to the illustration of these few ideas:

I. *Nothing is more amiable in itself or more pleasing to God, than Early Piety.*

Early piety, though not so venerable as aged virtue, is yet equally attractive and interesting.

To see good principles thoroughly governing the whole conduct; to see them prevail over all youthful levities and follies; to see passions at a time of life when usually most ungovernable, yet subjected to reason and conscience; to see the spirit and vanity of the world despised and trampled under foot; to see constancy, steadiness and uniformity of life, at a season when irresolution and the caprice of fancy frequently prevail; to see a person while yet in the morn of life, with the sentiments of a virtuous old age, is surely in itself a desirable and interesting spectacle.

And this conduct, so agreeable in itself, is likewise *most pleasing to God.* Read your scriptures; you will there find God frequently and affectionately calling upon you, to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth;" (Eccles. xii. 1.) assuring you, that "if you seek him early, you shall find him;" (Prov. viii. 17.) and confirming the sincerity of these calls, the truth of these assurances, by examples of the especial favour with which he ever regarded early converts. God has then clearly expressed his desire, that you should turn unto him; and shall this consideration have no influence upon you? Methinks if no other argument could be offered for youthful piety but this, *it is pleasing to God,* a reasonable being ought not to hesitate how to act. Consider for a moment who is this God, who thus importunately

urges you to seek after him. He is the *all-perfect God*, and therefore infinitely worthy of the service of a whole life, deserving of the attachment of our youthful hearts, as well as of our aged souls. He is the *eternally blessed God*, and can therefore from the exhaustless source of his all-sufficiency, shed down upon us those streams of benedictions and favours which will satisfy our souls, and abundantly recompense us for those trifling gratifications that we relinquish for him. He is the *creating God*, and shall we, his offspring, rise in rebellion against him, and ungratefully use the faculties he has given us, in opposition to him? He is the *preserving God*, without whose constant influence and support, we should be blotted from existence. Every pulse that beats, every moment that flies, is a new gift of his tender love, a new effect of his infinite power. If our first years flowed from a different source from our last, we might be excused for not consecrating them to him; but since he gives you all your life, what right have you to rob him of the period of youth? He is the *Redeemer God*, and he adjures you by the agonies of the garden, and the blood of the cross, to devote yourselves to him: of what must your hearts be made, if they can resist pleas so tender. He is the *kindest of fathers*, the best of friends, the most munificent of benefactors. He has already conferred upon you countless favours; and are you not dreadfully ungrateful, if in the midst

of these favours you refuse to comply with his affectionate commands ?

God calls you then to cultivate early piety, and it is infinitely fit that you obey his will.

II. *Youth is a season in which you have the greatest advantages for cultivating the principles of piety, and the greatest need of religion, as a defence from temptation and dangers.*

THE GREATEST ADVANTAGES. It is true that you find even in this age the principles of sin in your hearts ; but these principles have not yet been so fortified by repeatedly impelling to action, nor by reiterated actions become such powerful habits, as they will be at any future time. You have not yet so connected your iniquities with all your pursuits, and made them so to mingle with all your occupations, as you will hereafter have done. Your mind is now open for the reception of truth ; in a great degree uncorrupted by prejudices ; at least, unattached to them from long possession ; having a docility and teachableness of disposition, from a conviction of your inexperience, the principles of piety may more easily be implanted, and having fewer obstacles to oppose them, will take firmer root. Your heart is now warm and tender ; unchilled by the commerce of the world ; free from the callousness of age ; its native emotions glowing

with all their force, it is more easily moved by the love of its God, by the mercy of its Redeemer, by all those tender incitements to duty, which the gospel presents to it. Your passions, though more ardent, are notwithstanding, more manageable, more easily turned from improper objects, than they will be, when inveterate and confirmed habits have been formed. As yet, the sentiments of modesty and propriety, a regard to the opinions of others, make you blush for your acts of vice, and endeavour to conceal them from the world. In riper years you will assume a boldness in iniquity; disregard the censures of others; cease to be restrained by them, till at last you may come to "glory in your shame." (Phil. iii. 19.) As yet you are not entangled in the business, the follies, the tumult of the world, which so often engross all the affections and thoughts of riper years: you are not yet entirely occupied with prosecuting the schemes of ambition, or amassing heaps of treasure, but have full time for meditating on the concerns of a better state. As yet, conscience has not been often stifled and deeply corrupted: It still preserves, if I may speak so, its tremulous delicacy, and nice sensibility; it still elevates its warning voice, and strongly remonstrates at your deviation from virtue; but in the aged sinner, weary of useless reproof, it is almost silent, or if it still speak, it is almost always disregarded. As yet, you have an ardour and fervency, most remote from the

timid prudence of age, and most favourable to a thorough conversion. Disdaining all resistance, ambitious of high atchievments, leaping over opposing obstacles, youth flies to the goal, whilst age, creeping fearfully along, clinging still to the enjoyments of earth, discouraged by every difficulty, will scarcely ever attain it. Like the wife of Lot, it may proceed a small distance from the city, doomed to destruction, but devoid of alacrity and vigour, it will seldom reach the Zoar, the place of safety. It must be evident to you, my brethren, that these dispositions and sentiments, are from their nature, calculated to advance you in the christian course: of themselves, they are not sufficient to make you holy; but when grace sanctifies them, and directs them to proper objects, they must render your progress in religion more rapid and more delightful. And remember too, that this inciting grace, is given you in greater measure in youth, than in advanced life; that God by his spirit now beseeches, and importunes you to turn and live more frequently and forcibly, than he will hereafter. I appeal to you, aged sinners, for the truth of this representation. Are there none of you who often in early life, felt the attractions and suggestions of the Holy Ghost, which "almost persuaded you to be christians;" (Acts xxvi. 28.) but who, now that you have advanced in life, and are nearer to perdition, scarcely ever think of the destiny that awaits you; scarcely ever

are induced to meditate seriously, on the means to avoid it. You see then, my young friends, that whether you consider your own disposition, or the conduct of God, you find advantages for progressing in piety, which you will not have at any other period of your lives. If then you have not renounced all hope and desire for salvation, (and surely none of you can be so mad, as deliberately to sacrifice the pleasures of heaven, and embrace the tortures of hell)—if you wish to apply the most suitable means for the attainment of this salvation, (and you are not reasonable creatures, if you do not wish it)—will you not imitate the example of the pious king of Judah, and "begin while yet young, to seek after the God of your fathers."

And if the advantages which you now enjoy for the cultivation of religion, form a strong inducement to you to attend to the concerns of piety, so also do the DANGERS and TEMPTATIONS to which you are now exposed. Every other period of life has some salutary restraints and guards which are denied to youth. *Childhood*, is weak and feeble, without power or temptation to commit many sins, and subjected to the visitant controul of parents. *Manhood*, is occupied by business and avocations; and, in pursuit of honours and emoluments, finds it necessary by at least an appearance of virtue, to conciliate the esteem and respect of the world. *Old age*, has the lessons of experience, is impotent to do evil, and

beholds death, judgment, eternity, nearly approaching. But *youth*, is left without any of these powerful restraints, these salutary guards. The world, whose treachery and falsehood it has not yet known, spreads before it a thousand gay and alluring scenes, to draw it aside from virtue. Every thing is novel; every thing is captivating. The blood courses with impetuosity through the veins; passion and appetite are in their full vigour; objects to excite them are each moment presented; judgment is immature; reason without the aids of experience; the imagination active in creating illusions; the heart sensible to pleasure, easily inflamed, lively and impetuous in its desires. Ah! in so perilous a situation, what but the sacred guidance of religion can preserve us? A young person without this guidance, resembles a vessel without rudder and without pilot, tossed on an agitated ocean in the midst of an obscure night, conflicting with violent storms, dashing frequently against quicksands and rocks, liable each moment to be shivered into pieces, or to sink into the abyss.

Stop then for a moment, my young friends; think of your danger, and in order to avoid it, "begin" with Josiah "to seek after the God of your fathers."

III. *By early piety, you will prepare tranquility and joy for old age, should you arrive unto it;*

whilst by an opposite conduct you will fill it with remorse and fears.

An old man, who has forgotten God in his youth, is seldom converted; and if he is not, how wretched must he be in that period of weakness and debility, when supports and consolation are so much needed, since his views of the past, the present, and the future, bring with them nothing but grief and anguish. He contemplates the past; he sees a whole life given him to prepare for eternity, squandered in vanity and sin; he sees a wide and dreary waste, where the eye is relieved by no monuments of virtue and piety; he considers the present, and is filled with confusion; he turns towards the future, and with gloom and distress, beholds death for which he has not prepared, pressing upon him; beholds a tribunal where he can hope for no acquital, already erected; beholds an eternity of joys which he would fain possess, but which he has bartered for those pleasures, of which nothing remains but an insipid or painful remembrance; beholds an eternity of torments, which he has merited by his sins and iniquities. The ghosts of departed joys flit before him, and point to those regions of woe, whither sinful delights conduct. Such is the old age of those who remember not God in their youth, and then remain, as they almost always do, at a distance from him during the whole course of their lives. Even if (to make the most favour-

able supposition, and a supposition which is seldom verified) even if called at the eleventh hour, this aged man has truly turned unto the Lord, how far will he be from enjoying the same pleasure as the early convert. He will almost certainly be subject at times to painful apprehensions and doubts; to fears that he forsakes the world, only because he can no longer retain it; that he renounces the enjoyments of earth, only because from the decay of his body, from the feebleness of his mind, and the weakness of his fancy, he is unable to indulge in them. These, and a thousand other similar fears, generally occasion in the mind of him who is converted in old age, a painful hesitancy concerning the security of his state, prevent him from going on his way rejoicing, and cloud that prospect of immortality which would be a stay to his soul.

How much more consolatory and cheering are the meditations of the aged christian, who remembered his creator in the days of his youth. He is solaced in reviewing his conduct, to find the brightest evidences of his sincerity; for he forsook the world when it appeared in its most alluring garb, and spread its most glittering snares to entangle him: He forsook it when his ardent passions and vigorous powers enabled him to participate in its pleasures with the greatest gust; he has long and successfully warred under the banner of the Captain of his salvation; he has resisted the most vio-

lent temptations of hope or fear, which would have drawn him from his duty. The perplexing doubts which harass the pious but unexperienced, concerning their steadfastness and perseverance in the ways of religion, are for him past, and his mind is serene as the regions of heaven. In reviewing the past, he sees the long interval between the season of youth and the furrowed countenance and hoary head of age, filled up in some good degree with works of devotion, righteousness, and benevolence; whereby he has glorified God, benefited his brother, and made provision that his memory should always be precious; and the recollection of them makes him re-enjoy the scenes through which he has passed. Ah! what can be more delightful than to remember, how early he was enabled to devote himself to God; how frequently he has conflicted with difficulties and trials for his sake; how rich has been his experience of the providential care and protection of his Heavenly Father; how often he has enjoyed communion with his God; lifted up his desires to him, and poured out before him the warm effusions of his soul. And if from the past, he turns and contemplates the future, views the most animating are presented to him; he fixes a steady eye upon those glories in which he knows he is interested; he rejoices that he almost touches the object of all his hopes and desires; that he will shortly be admitted into the presence of that God, whom he has so long loved,

and be delivered from a combat which has so long endured.

Surely an old age thus placid and venerable, is an object worthy of our desires: surely these peaceful recollections, these sublime prospects, amidst the dreariness of age, are deserving our exertions. Do you wish to attain them? "Remember your creator in the days of your youth; then no evil days shall come; no years draw nigh in which you shall say, I have no pleasure in them." (Eccles. xii. 1. 2.)

IV. *A regard to the feelings of all the pious persons in the church universal, a respect to the happiness of your parents, should induce you early to devote yourselves to God.*

You know not, my young friends, the severe pain which is felt by all true christians, in beholding unconverted youth. As the ancient and honourable pillars of the temple fall one by one; as the aged persons who have been zealous and faithful soldiers of Christ, pass in succession from the church militant to the church triumphant; we look around with anxiety upon the rising generation, to see who will supply their places, who will wield the weapons which have fallen from their hands, who will in their stead direct and encourage the body of the faithful. And if, instead of the piety which

distinguished these holy christians, we see in their progeny a disregard of God and his ordinances, an enmity and distaste to a holy life, a worldly and careless spirit; oh! you know not the grief which such prospects excite in the hearts of all who sincerely love the Lord. Young men, amongst this pious band whom your inconsiderate conduct thus deeply wounds, there are numbers whom you are bound to honour and revere, numbers for whom you express high esteem and regard. Will you not be sufficiently generous and affectionate to pause and attend to the things which belong to your eternal peace, in order to give happiness and joy to so many of your fellow-men?

Or if this consideration be too general to affect you, think for a moment how deeply the felicity of your PARENTS depends upon your early piety. This is a motive which Solomon often addresses to youth. "A wise son," (you know that in the scriptures *wise* and *pious* are used as synonymous expressions, because piety is the only true wisdom:) "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." (Prov. x. 1.) And elsewhere, "A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her that bare him." (Prov. xvii. 25.) And again he affectionately urges, "My son, be wise and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me." (Prov. xxvii. 11.) These and numerous other exhortations of the

same import made by Solomon, were dictated by his experience. He had seen how his own pious conduct in early life, had cheered the heart of his father David, amidst the infirmities and sorrows of age; he himself had felt, from the conduct of Rehoboam, pains so deep, that they could not be effaced by the splendour of royalty, the pomp of power, the respect and veneration which the people entertained for him. All the other enjoyments of life were embittered and rendered tasteless by the wanderings of an irreligious son. My young friends, if your parents are sincerely pious, they feel a regret equal to that of Solomon, at your neglect of God, and forgetfulness of your eternal destination. Nature and grace have taught them to love you as themselves, and if all the pleasures which the earth can afford were heaped upon them, they would still be unhappy, if their child were the slave of satan and the heir of eternal sorrow. Believe me, I do not exaggerate their feelings. I have witnessed in my parochial visits, every minister has witnessed in his parochial visits, more than once, this anguish of a tender father, these tears of a loving mother; anguish, tears, which were rendered still more bitter by the reflection, that they were caused by those who should have consoled and cheered their declining years. And I have on the contrary seen the eye of the aged parent lighted up with joy, and heard him pour forth his thanksgivings to God, at beholding his offspring walking in the path of good-

ness and religion. When he beheld the morn of their life thus hallowed and consecrated to God, the afflictions of life lost their sting, and his soul was filled with transport.

And as by your pious or irreligious conduct, you thus affect the feelings of your parents during the whole course of their lives; so do you especially prepare for them sources of inexpressible delight or misery, at the moment when death shall separate you from them. If you should enter before them into the unseen world, they can part from you without regret if you are truly devoted to God. They know that this separation is not final; they know that they shall meet you in a better world. The view of that glory in which you are interested will enable them to say to you with christian resignation, "Farewell, our dear child; we had hoped that thou wouldst have remained to have closed our eyes and received our last breath; but God calls thee before us; go then and receive the crown of glory; go and rest in the embraces of thy Saviour; we will shortly follow thee; we will meet thee again before the throne of God; and there we shall form ties more tender and more strict, than those which united us on earth; there we shall enjoy a felicity pure as the eternal mind, and durable as the existence of God. Go then, dear child; thy Saviour beckons thee to come; the angels are waiting to convey thy soul unto him; adieu, but

not forever." O my brethren, what powerful consolations are these to a believer, when his offspring are torn from him by death ; how different are these feelings from those which wring the hearts of parents as they hang over the death-bed of an *irreligious* child. In trembling anxiety they mark the approach of his dissolution ; his closing eye, his livid mouth, the death-like paleness spread over his whole countenance, teach them that in a few moments more, his destiny will be fixed for ever. They look to the future, but no cheering ray consoles them ; all is dark, dismal, and afflictive ; they behold their child torn from their embraces, seized by the fiends, and sentenced to that abyss whence "the smoke of his torments shall ascend for ever and ever." Thus keenly oppressed, they lean over his corpse, and exclaim with a heart almost broken with anguish, "Oh ! Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee !" Merciful God, be present to such mourners, for thy consolations alone can prevent their gray hairs from descending in sorrow to the grave !

The feelings of your parents are of the same force, if, as is the common order of nature, they finish their lives before you. If you are truly pious, they can leave you with confidence to the protection of your heavenly friend ; upheld by the hope, that you will be honoured and respected by men,

and at last acknowledged and received by the Lord. Animated by this hope, they will be serene and happy till the final pulse of their heart, and the last trembling accents that they utter, shall bless you for that ineffable pleasure which your pious conduct affords to them. But if, when you surround your dying parents you are still in your sins, you will disturb the tranquillity of their closing hours, and prevent them from giving up their souls to God with that serenity and triumph, which they might otherwise feel. Afflicted at the apprehension of your future destiny, fearful that you will plunge still more deeply into sin, when you shall no longer be restrained by their tender counsels and pious admonitions, they will be tortured by *you*, by their child: you, whose whole study and occupation it should be to render their dying hours pleasant and happy, will pierce their bosoms with sorrows more excruciating than those that were caused by their bitterest enemies. O Saviour! thou, who when about to re-assume thy glory, weptest at the prospect of the sins and perdition of thy much beloved Jerusalem; how often hast thou seen poor afflicted parents about to receive the crown of immortality, yet having their souls racked at beholding their unholy posterity! Ah! perhaps there are such at this moment somewhere stretched on the bed of languishment! O Saviour! haste to their succour, lest they be driven by the keenness of their tortures to revolt and to murmur at thy holy will!

My brethren, these scenes are not too highly coloured. They have often been presented to those of you who are in the habit of attending the death-bed of the saints. And what effect shall they have upon you, my young friends? Will you fail to be moved by the sighs and distresses of a tender father, by the anguish and tears of the mother that bore you? Will you still delight in grieving, in stabbing them to the heart? If so, pretend not to the sentiments of humanity; if so, renounce the name of man which you so much dishonour. But if, as I love to believe, you have acted thus through inconsiderateness and want of reflection, pause instantly; and even though you are so foolish as to trifle and sport with endless perdition, be not so brutal as to trifle and sport with the feelings of your parents; and for their sakes, if not for your own, begin to seek early the God of your fathers.

My brethren, will any of you say, in order to avoid the force of this appeal to the best feelings of your nature—"All this, though true, is not applicable to me—my parents themselves are unconverted, and have not these feelings." Woe, woe, to such criminal parents! they shall answer not only for their own souls; the blood of their children also shall be required at their hands! But leaving them to their Judge, let us enquire whether filial affection will not powerfully urge you also to seek the Lord, although your parents are as you

say, unconverted. Yes, if you will turn unto the Lord, you will save them from accumulated misery. Their punishment, though it be *solitary*, will be inconceivably severe, when they are enwrapped in the flames of the abyss. But oh! if they meet you there, it will be tenfold more excruciating. The sight of you will kindle in their breasts an inward hell. At sight of you, conscience will speak to them in a voice of thunder, and reproach them, that worse than the worshippers of Moloch, they have not been contented with their own perdition, unless they could also sacrifice their child to satan, and devote him to the flames: Oh! flee in time then to Jesus, that you may not bring down this *additional* punishment on the heads of your parents. Oh! flee in time to Jesus, and you may perhaps be made the instruments of saving your parents from *all* these horrors. I recollect that it is remarked by the pious Baxter, that "at Kidderminster, where God most blest his labours, his first and greatest success was amongst the youth; and that when God had touched their hearts, the parents and grand-parents, who had grown old in an ignorant, worldly state, were many of them savingly converted unto the Lord." Many others, besides Baxter, have seen divine mercy operating in a similar manner. Oh! my brethren, what a powerful inducement is this! Your parents gave you animal life; you, by attending to the concerns of piety, may perhaps be made the instruments of their spiri-

tual life: Your parents have brought you into this fading world; you may perhaps be made the instruments of raising them to that world of light, where there are pleasures for ever more. Oh! if you really love these parents, turn, turn unto the Lord, that he may have mercy upon *you*, and that he may through you, "pluck *them* as brands from the burning."

Are there any amongst you who say, this motive still does not address me; my parents have left this earth, and their destinies are already fixed and immutable. Still this motive does address you, and address you with force. Are your parents lost and undone? We have already told you, that you will increase their torments by descending to join them. From the bosom of the pit the ungodly rich man cried out, "I pray thee father Abraham, to send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren, lest they also come into this place of torment." (Luke. xvi. 28.) If your parents are the companions of this rich man, they also supplicate you to avoid their lot; to come not thither to aggravate their sufferings. Are your parents among the blest? Remember how Jesus hath told you that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth:" (Luke. xv. 10.) and if your parents are amongst these angels, they surely, in an eminent degree participate in this joy. Think then, that perhaps the spirit of

thy father, of thy mother, is at this moment regarding thee with tender solicitude; is watching whether all the advices they have given to thee, all the prayers they have offered for thee, all the sighs and tears which thou hast forced from them, shall be of no avail; whether thou wilt not by turning unto the Lord, bestow on them a new sensation of joy, even in the midst of paradise; give them liberty to entertain the hope again to join you, when you enter into the kingdom of God, and to exclaim with transport—"Return, my child; return to my parental embraces."

V. Finally, (for although I fear I have already exhausted your patience, yet I cannot resolve to leave you without urging one more motive:) Finally, *on your conduct in youth, your salvation or perdition, almost infallibly depend.* I can conceive no consideration more impressive than this: listen, if you please, to its proof and illustration.

If you do not in your youth seek the God of your fathers, a *prolongation of your life* will be indispensably necessary to repair this neglect. Are you certain that your life will be thus prolonged? Have you not seen thousands whose health was as firm, whose prospects as fair as yours, cut off in their bloom, and summoned to meet their Judge in the midst of their schemes of future amendment? You act as though you were assured that this would not

be your lot; but whence have you derived this assurance? Have you ascended into the heavens, and there penetrated into the counsels of that God, "who holdeth in his hands the keys of life and of death;" who hath appointed the number of your days beyond which you cannot pass? Or have you fettered the hands of the Almighty, so that he cannot snatch you hence before your repentance? Have you, if I may borrow the strong language of Isaiah; have you "made a covenant with death," that he shall not yet smite you; "an agreement with hell," (Isaiah xxviii. 15.) that it shall not yet swallow you up? No, no; you like the rest of men are ignorant of the duration of your life: You know not whether this sun that enlightens you, shall not before it sets behold you a corpse; you are not sure but that the angel of death has already received his commission, and is already winging his flight to tear your unwilling soul from its body, and bear it to the tribunal of God, to sustain there all the holiness, the purity, the strictness of his judgment. And yet in so perilous a state, you are cool and tranquil;—and yet in so dreadful an uncertainty you can be sportive and gay. When your body is attacked by a disorder, you think not of deferring till to-morrow the remedies which may immediately be applied; when your house is enwrapped in flames, you endeavour without delay to extinguish them; but when your soul is stricken by the mortal malady of sin, when you are burning with unholy desires and preparing to be consumed

in the flames of the abyss; you cry, that at some more convenient season you will attend to these matters, but that there is no need of instant anxiety and attention. God of our lives! thou only knowest whether they will not be in the eternal world, before this anticipated period arrives.

Let us however suppose for a moment that some friendly hand had lifted for you the veil of futurity, and removed all its uncertainty; let us suppose that God had revealed to you that you should yet live fifty, a hundred, or a thousand years, if you please: still *it is by no means probable that at the expiration of this term you would be willing to seek the Lord and renounce your sin.* Sin will then have become deeply habitual; its chains will have not only the strength but also the brilliant lustre of the adamant. Your criminal inclinations will be fortified by frequent exercise and by guilty example; will mingle in the whole course of your life, and become incorporated into your very essence; your understanding will be obscured by your guilt, and those false reasonings which you shall have so often used to quiet your fears, will appear to you irrefragable arguments; your conscience, whose monitions you shall so often have rejected, will be almost silent, and will reserve its testimony to be given in at the bar of your Judge; your heart corrupted by sin, will be devoid of all taste for pure and holy pleasures; your imagination whose endless illusions you shall have experienced,

will occupy itself in mustering up the images of past pleasures, to furnish new aliment to the flame that devours you, and to re-animate dying passions. Is it conceivable that in such a situation you will be willing and disposed to forsake your sins and seek the Lord; to do what you are unwilling to do now while sin is less habitual and less endeared? Is it not probable that, a slave in the fetters which your own hands shall have forged, you will not even make one struggle to deliver yourself from them? If unconvinced by this reflection, go and consult experience. How few do you find among real christians; how few pious persons in this assembly who do not date the period of their conversion from their youth: How few are there in the number of those who hear my voice, who after neglecting to seek God in their youth have since become his true disciples: How many aged sinners who see all the consequences of their iniquities, who know the perdition which awaits them, yet still love their crimes, cling to them, refuse to separate from them. Will not this probably be your lot also my young friends, if you longer neglect to seek the God of your fathers?

Will you say—"All this is true; of ourselves we shall not be able to turn to God; nevertheless his grace will be sufficient to dispose and enable us to do it; there is no resistance which it cannot overcome." God forbid that a minister of Christ should deny the omnipotence of grace, or bound the power

of the Most High. We know that if he pleases "he can of the stones raise up children to Abraham." (Mat. iii. 9.) We know that he can convert the most hardened sinners if he undertake to do it, if he interpose in their behalf; but will he thus undertake, will he thus interpose, if you now in your youth neglect to seek after him? This is the question which concerns you; let us examine what answer we must make to it.

Grace then is necessary for our conversion. Nevertheless scripture and reason concur in teaching us that God, in righteous judgement, withholds the internal influences of this grace from certain persons, who have previously abused and neglected it. Grace then being necessary for conversion, and this grace being withheld from these sinners, it is indubitable that they must be sealed up in judicial hardness, and remain forever unconverted. My brethren, I view this as the most awful truth of our religion; I stop not to prove it; it has more than once been established from this sacred desk; let us apply it to our subject. The just and sovereign Jehovah then will not forever bestow the secret inspirations of his grace to be despised, contemned, and rejected; those who now impiously refuse it, and contemptuously neglect it, may hereafter seek for it in vain. And say, young men, have you not cause to fear that this will be your destiny, if, notwithstanding the warnings that are given you, not-

withstanding the conviction of your mind, the inward solicitations of your conscience, the suggestions of the Holy Spirit; you form the frightful resolution to give the strength of your years to satan and the world, contemptuously to reject God, and to bring to him at last the dregs of a life exhausted in the service of his enemies? Have you not cause to fear that when you shall have acted conformably to these resolutions, and shall at last come to offer to God a heart infected with vices, a body worn out in crime, a mind filled with false sentiments; have you not cause to fear that he will then refuse you the riches of his grace, and denying you every mercy, send you back to your first masters whom you have always served? That he will say to you—"Go to that world to which you have consecrated your youth; let it rescue you from the grave and from perdition, and give you eternal felicity. Go to sin, your tyrant, let him give you the wages due unto his slaves, *death*, which is the recompense that he pays to those that serve him. Go to the prince of darkness, to whom you have sold yourselves to do evil. To them you made the offering of your best days; give them also what remains to you."

Thus whether we consider the uncertainty of life, or the increasing power of sin, or the bounds set to the day of grace, we must be convinced that forgetfulness of God in youth, leads almost infallibly to eternal perdition.

And now, my young friends, will you still remain regardless of your duty? Will you not resolve in the strength of the Lord to relinquish your worldly life, your ungodly habits, your sins and iniquities? Will you not at length return to your God, to your Father, to your Redeemer? Will you not accept that mercy which is offered to you? Sinner, the God of heaven beholds thee; he hears this exhortation which I now make unto thee. Wilt thou, by neglecting this invitation, force him to take hold on justice, and reject thee from his presence? Sinner, the eyes of Jesus are fixed upon thee; of that Jesus at whose bar we must shortly stand. He offers to deliver thee from perdition; he offers thee the blessings of his covenant. O! trifle no longer with eternity, but instantly resolve in dependence on his promised grace, to put thy soul under the bonds of his covenant. Go to thy private chamber; there on thy knees bewail thy sins and transgressions, and pray for grace to give thyself up wholly to God.

Act thus, and with Josiah you shall be gathered to the church of the first-born in heaven, where you shall shout forever—"Blessing and honour and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever....AMEN."

SERMON IV.

JESUS WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

LUKE xix. 41, 42.

"*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying—If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*"

WHEN the elder Marcellus had taken Syracuse, after a long and dangerous siege, he was not so much elated by the success of his arms, by the splendour of victory, and the congratulations of his troops, as he was affected by the prospect of that devastation which threatened the city; and instead of insolently triumphing, he melted into tears.* The ancient historians have rightly eulogised this action: It was an unequivocal proof of a tender, feeling, generous soul.—But "a greater than" Marcellus "is here." The conduct of our Saviour exhibits still warmer tenderness, still deeper feeling, still more elevated

* Marcellus, ut mœnia ingressus ex superioribus locis urbem, omnium fermè illa tempestate pulcherrimam, subjectam oculis videt, illachrymasse fertur.

Tit. Liv. Hist. Lib. XV.—See also PLUTARCH.

generosity. He was now descending from Mount Olivet, and entering into Jerusalem. He is not surrounded, it is true, like a Roman conqueror, by kings in chains, and slaves loaded with the spoils of vanquished nations. But, what is infinitely more splendid, he is encircled by the trophies of his almighty power; by demoniacs, whom he has delivered; by the blind, on whose eyes he has poured the light of day; by the dumb, whose tongues he has loosed, and who shout his praises; by the dead, whom he has caused to spring into new life: He advances to complete the conquest of satan and of sin, whom he has already bound in fetters which cannot be broken: He comes, loaded with heavenly spoils and celestial gifts, which were purchased not by the sack of cities and the dying groans of thousands, but entirely by his own humiliation, and agonies, and blood. The multitude crowd to meet him, strew their garments in his path, with palms in their hands welcome the Prince of peace, and shout hosannas to the son of David. These circumstances would have elated an ordinary mind, and filled it with self-complacency and pride; but in the midst of them he cast his eyes upon the city, which was now in full view, and anticipating its impending calamities, tenderly wept over it: He knew that in a few days it would demand his death, it would nail him to the cross, it would riot in his agonies; yet he still wept over it. Compare then these two scenes; place Mar-

cellus by the side of the Saviour; which character shines with greater lustre? The one displays no haughtiness, although a mighty city has yielded to his arms: the other is humble, although he has forced the laws of nature, although he has stormed and vanquished hell, and unbarred the gates of heaven for our reception. The one weeps over depressed, trembling, subjugated foes, who will not insult and who cannot injure him: The other weeps over those who, he certainly knows, will in a few days cover him with reproaches and ignominies, torture him by the most refined cruelties, and inflict upon him a painful, and accursed death. Yes! I repeat it; "a greater than" Marcellus "is here." If Marcellus acted as a generous man, Christ acted as a God-man. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying—If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Come then, my brethren, let us carefully contemplate the conduct and expressions of our Lord on this occasion; and whilst we are thus employed, grant, most merciful Jesus, that we may not be insensible to thy tears, but may be induced to lament those transgressions which caused thee to weep, and savingly to improve the day of our visitation.

Our discourse shall have two parts :—We will

I. Explain to you the causes of the Saviour's tears, and the purport of the words which he uttered ; and

II. We will deduce from these tears and these words, some important truths, in which we are deeply interested.

I. "When he beheld the city, *he wept over it.*" Are you surprised to see the Saviour weep? Do you suppose this a weakness inconsistent with his dignity and elevation? Thus thought a sect of ancient heretics, mentioned by ecclesiastical historians, who erased from their copies of the scriptures, all those parts which speak of the tears of Jesus. I know not whether more to admire their presumption or their folly; their presumption, in daring to alter the perfect character of Jesus; their folly in supposing that the Saviour would be more noble, if he were divested of his overflowing benevolence, and endued with a stoical apathy. If the tears of Jesus had been wrung from him by his own distresses, they would perhaps have displayed some weakness. But he always met his own woes with a firm soul and a dry eye. When arraigned at a criminal bar; when buffeted, insulted, scourged, he is undaunted and serene; when labouring under the weight of his cross, and in the

prospect of immediate execution, he says to the afflicted spectators, with an unfaltering voice, "Weep not for me; weep for yourselves." No, no! his tears never flowed but from his sympathy with the unhappy or perishing; they attest his grace, they endear him to the believer; and I had far rather that the most splendid of his miracles should be erased from the sacred volume, than that we should be ignorant that Jesus wept.

But what were those circumstances which caused the tears to gush from his eyes at this time? These three: 1. The prospect of the temporal calamities which hung over Jerusalem. 2. The consideration of those sins of which these calamities were the punishment, and of that eternal destruction of which they were the emblem. 3. The reflection that the time in which it was possible to avert these woes had now past.

1. That the Saviour had regard to the *temporal calamities* which were just descending on this devoted city, is evident from the verses immediately following the text: "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou

knewest not the time of thy visitation." Possessed of infinite knowledge, seeing the future as distinctly as the present, he already beheld those fearful scenes which attended the destruction of Jerusalem, and of which the Jewish historian has given us so lamentable a description. He saw war mowing down thousands, and famine and sedition destroying those whom war had spared. He saw the flames seizing upon the towers, the walls, the habitations, and not respecting even the temple of God. He saw those countless numbers which were put to the sword; those carcases heaped upon carcases; those waves of blood which deluged the city. He saw those eleven hundred thousand persons who perished during this season of distress; the hundred thousand persons who were loaded with chains, and carried into painful captivity. All these miseries and many others which befel Jerusalem, before it was utterly destroyed, were present to the view of the Redeemer. Was it then wonderful that he poured forth his tears?

2. But this was not the only, nor even the principal cause of the tears of the Saviour. Combining the cause with the effect; beholding not only these temporal judgments, but also the iniquities of which they were the punishment; seeing the eternal torments which awaited these unhappy men in the world of spirits, as well as the woes which they would endure on this side the grave; regard-

ing sin as the greatest of evils, and the everlasting agonies of the soul as far more lamentable than the transient sufferings of this life; it is evident that the principal cause of his tears was the prospect of those *sins*, which drew down these temporal calamities, and of that *future punishment*, of which they were only the earnests. He saw the obstinacy, the impenitence, the hardness of heart, the numberless crimes of the Jewish people: he saw the deep guilt of iniquity: he saw the hell which was prepared for those who persist in it. No veil interposed between his eyes and the future; he beheld these things, not in distant prospect, but as already happening. Already he saw these wretched men condemned; already he beheld them enwrapped in the flames. Was it surprising that he should weep at scenes so doleful? If David poured forth his tears for the death of one rebellious son, much more would the compassionate Lord of David weep at the eternal perdition of so many thousands.

3. Still there would have been less cause for grief, if an opportunity of averting these judgments had remained unto them. But *this opportunity was forever lost.* They had neglected the time of their visitation, and the things which belonged to their peace were hidden from their eyes. They had filled up the measure of their iniquities; the mercy of God had ceased to plead for them;

justice had raised its arm, red with vengeance, to dart its thunders; their sentence had been pronounced, and it was irrevocable. Oh! how must this consideration have affected the compassionate heart of the Saviour!

Such then were the causes of the tears which Jesus shed over Jerusalem: But he not only wept, he likewise uttered this pathetic lamentation: "*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace—But now they are hid from thine eyes.*" What could he possibly have said that would have been more expressive or affecting? He begins a sentence, but overcome by the violence of his feelings cannot finish it, and leaves the imagination to supply what the tongue cannot utter. There is not a word but what speaks to the heart. "*If thou hadst known, even thou.*" There is in this repetition, a touching tenderness, and force of expostulation. It is as though Jesus had said, I am less grieved and surprised at the iniquities of other nations, to which I have manifested less affection, and on which I have conferred fewer privileges: But *thou*, much-favoured, much-beloved Zion; *thou*, who hast been the seat of my temple, the habitation of my prophets, the sanctuary of my religion, the receiver of my mercies; *thou*, whom I have always watched, and nourished, and blessed; wilt thou, *even thou*, criminally neglect thy privileges, and obsti-

nately rush on to perdition. "If thou hadst known even thou, *at least in this thy day*," i. e. in that period when God still proffered salvation to thee; when the patience of the Lord was not yet exhausted; when the dreadful sentence had not yet been pronounced, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still:" (Rev. xxii. 11.) "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:" (Hos. iv. 17.) "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, therefore I will not purge thee from thy sins any more till I cause my fury to rest upon thee:" (Ezek. xxiv. 13.) This day, for Jerusalem had now past; the prediction of the prophet was now to be accomplished: "The time is come, the day of trouble is near. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth." (Ezek. vii. 7, 8, 9.)

"If thou hadst known, even thou, *the things that belong to thy peace*:" i. e. if thou hadst diligently considered, and earnestly sought those things which would have procured for thee the peace and favour of God, his protection from thine enemies on earth, and his glories and love in the world which is to come.

"*But now they are hid from thine eyes.*"—How is this, my brethren? Had not the inhabit-

ants of Jerusalem after this period, any of the means of grace? Did God from this time cease to call them to himself by the preaching of the apostles, and the course of his providence? We know that even after the death of Jesus, the apostles remained in the midst of the city, working miracles in its streets, proclaiming the atonement made by Christ, and exhorting the people to "repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins." And if we believe the Jews themselves, in proportion as the time for the destruction of the city approached, God wrought new and more surprising prodigies in heaven and on earth, to reclaim them. How then could it be said that the things which belonged to their peace, were hidden from their eyes? These facts are not at all inconsistent with this declaration of the Saviour. For these warnings, remonstrances, exhortations, miracles, would be ineffectual to remove the darkness which rested on the minds of the Jews, unless they were accompanied by the influences of divine grace. This grace, God, provoked by their continued impenitence, was resolved to withhold; and in consequence of this righteous procedure, the things that belonged to the peace of the Jews were hidden from their eyes, even whilst the light of divine truth was shining with lustre around them. "*And when he came near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying—If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong*

unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

Having thus explained to you the text, let us now

II. Deduce from it two truths in which we are most deeply interested.

1. The day of grace has its limits, and if we pass beyond them before our peace is made with God, our destruction is remediless.

2. The Redeemer is desirous that we should not, by our criminal neglect of this precious season, bring upon ourselves this destruction.

1. The day of grace has its limits, and if we pass beyond them before our peace is made with God, our destruction is remediless.

The text proves in the clearest manner, that this was the case with respect to Jerusalem. It assures us, that all those things which belonged to the temporal and eternal peace of this city, were granted to it for a certain limited time, called its day of visitation; that because the Jews despised during this determinate period, the means of salvation which God bestowed upon them, they therefore were consigned to utter destruction; and though Jesus and his apostles afterwards preached

within their walls, yet that grace which alone could render these discourses effectual, was withheld from them through the righteous judgment of God.

There are numberless passages of scripture which shew us that the conduct which God observed to Jerusalem, is that which he generally observes towards our race. Read that familiar and striking comparison employed by St. Paul, (Heb. vi. 7, 8.) "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." This earth is man; the rain which falls upon it, and the other cares which are employed by the husbandman, are the means of grace which he enjoys. If this man for a long season, give to God as all the fruit of his culture, only thorns and briars; that is to say, if he remain disobedient, notwithstanding all his spiritual advantages, he is rejected and abandoned by God, falls under the curse, and in future has nothing to expect but to be sentenced to devouring flames.

Consider the 12th chapter of St. John. This apostle there tells us, that although "Jesus did many miracles, yet the Jews believed not on him, that the saying of Isaiah might be accomplished, Lord, who hath believed our report and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed:" and he

adds that "they could not believe, because Isaiah had said again—He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, nor be converted." (John xii. 37, 40.) Here then are miracles which do not convince those who are the witnesses of them; and which do not have this effect, because in consequence of the long obstinacy of this people, God "has blinded their minds and hardened their hearts;" that is, (in conformity with the scriptural mode of speaking, by which God is said to do that which he does not interpose to prevent) has righteously resolved to withhold from them that grace which would have enlightened and softened them.

Listen to that exhortation of Isaiah (lv. 6.) "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Does it not clearly imply that there is a time when the Lord is no longer near men; when he will not be found by them?

Attend to the solemn representation given us in the 3d and 12th chapters to the Hebrews, where the oath of God to Israel, and the conduct of Isaac to Esau, are represented as typical of the divine procedure towards sinners of the present day. The children of Israel, instead of obeying the revelations, and being melted by the mercies of God, tempted, grieved, and provoked him for forty years;

and then the Lord wearied with their rebellions, "sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest." Esau at first despised the blessing; and afterwards in vain endeavoured to obtain it; for "when he would have inherited it, he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears." "These things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Listen to the divine Wisdom, asserting in the 1st chapter of the Proverbs, the rejection of those who have long trifled with the admonitions and reproofs of God. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24—31.)

But it would be impossible to enumerate all those

passages which declare, that "the Spirit of God shall not always strive with man;" (Gen. vi. 3.) that this Spirit may not only be grieved, and resisted, but entirely quenched; (1 Thes. v. 19.) that those who perseveringly refuse to hearken to the voice of the Lord, are by him "given up unto their own hearts lusts, to walk in their own counsels;" (Ps. lxxxi. 12.) that those who, "when they know God, glorify him not as God, neither are thankful, are often given up to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind;" (Rom. i. 21, 26, 28.) that on those who "receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, God sends strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned.—(2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12.)

It is then evident that the day of grace has its bounds, and is succeeded by a dark, a fearful, a stormy night. It is then evident that the divine patience has its limits; that the holy and sovereign God will not forever permit his secret inspirations and the suggestions of his Spirit to be rejected and treated with disdain.

Do you ask me to point out the precise bounds of this day? I acknowledge that I cannot do it. This is one of the secrets which God hath reserved to himself. We know in general that these bounds are different to different persons. In

some cases this day extends even to the close of life; but in other instances, and especially among those who have had high spiritual privileges, it probably often terminates by the middle of our days. On this subject it becomes us to speak with caution and reserve; but still let me be permitted to remark that there are certain persons who almost touch those limits, passing beyond which, the things that belong to their peace will be forever hidden from their eyes. The persons to whom I allude, are those who have been faithfully instructed in their duty; who have enjoyed in a high degree the common operations of the Holy Spirit; who have had deep and powerful convictions of their guilt; who have been filled with apprehension and terror at the punishment which they deserved; who have cried to God to have mercy upon them; who have solicitously enquired of the pious, "What shall we do to be saved?"—but who now have relapsed into more than their former coldness; have abandoned the exercises of devotion, live secure in known sin, and feeling no disquietude at their awful condition, jest at the most sacred truths of religion, and indulge an enmity against holiness, against the pious, against all that reprove or warn them. Such persons have indeed sad cause to apprehend that their day is on the decline, that the shadows of evening are fast overtaking them.

My brethren, when we press you from time to

time, to think of your everlasting interests, you secretly flatter yourselves that your health and life will still for a long time be continued to you, and that you will have sufficient leisure hereafter to attend to the concerns of your soul. I will not now tell you how dreadfully imprudent is this delay of repentance to a period which may never arrive: I will not point to the repository of the dead, and shew you the worm and putrefaction preying upon the mouldering carcases of those who like you, deferred their duty, intending afterwards to turn to the Lord; but who were surprised by death, and whose souls are now "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." What if you were certain of attaining even a patriarchal age, would this justify you in delaying repentance? Tell me, unhappy man, art thou assured that the day of thy grace will continue to the day of thy death? Hast thou read those secret counsels of God which Gabriel himself has not beheld, and discovered that the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth will patiently wait thy leisure till thy last sigh; will consent to be slighted and despised by thee, a worm, till thy final groan?

I cannot without shuddering, look around on you, my brethren, and think that there are perhaps some in this assembly, to whom this may be the last mean of grace which God will accompany by his influences on them; some to whom the Spirit is per-

haps now giving his last excitement, on the rejection of which he will forever depart, and the destiny of these wretched men be irreversibly fixed; some who may henceforth stand like the blasted fig-tree, only to wither and be burnt, having that awful curse denounced, "Let no fruit grow on you forever:" (Mat. xxi. 18.) some, on whom, as on the foolish delaying virgins, the door of divine mercy is about forever to be closed, and whose lives will be continued like that of Pharaoh, only to glorify the power and the justice of God—some, in one word, to whom it would be an unspeakable blessing, if God should instantly plunge them into the gulph of despair, since their flames would be far less hot, their woes far less excruciating, than they will hereafter be. God of vengeance! "my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments!" Father of mercies! forbid that any of us should experience so fearful a doom.

And if you should be excited to attend to the concerns of piety by motives so terrible, so also should you be allured to it from considering,

2. That the Redeemer is desirous that you should not, by a criminal neglect of this precious season, bring upon yourselves this destruction.

This is sufficiently proved by the tears which he shed over perishing sinners. They were not an

ostentatious display of unreal feeling, for "he never knew guile." Though he no longer is accessible to grief; though no sorrow enters into the kingdom of unmingled bliss; though no tears are shed upon the throne of glory, yet he still urges you not to neglect the day of your visitation.

Can you doubt of this, when you remember the names "full of grace" which he bears, the intent of his incarnation, the tender invitations and encouraging promises he has given you, the sufferings that he underwent for your salvation, and the welcome reception which he has given to every sinner, who has fled to him for safety.

Listen also to the language which he uses as God. When he beholds sinners scorning his proffered grace, and obstinately rushing on to destruction, what is his conduct? Does he instantly dart forth his thunders, and sink them in despair? No! he affectionately cries, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end:" (Deut. xxxii. 29.) "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me:" (Ps. lxxxi. 13.) "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die:" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned

within me; my repentings are kindled together:" (Hos. xi. 8.) Hear again the solemn assurance of God's holy word, that the Lord "is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth:" (2 Pet. iii. 9.)—and lest this assurance should not satisfy us, confirming it by his oath, saying, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live:" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) It is true that these expressions are to be understood in a sense worthy of infinite perfection, and so as to exclude from the divinity any disappointment or sorrow. But even with these limitations, do they not convince you that the Redeemer, who now appears as "the mighty God," having "all power committed to him in heaven and on earth," desires not the sins or the miseries of man?

Do not suppose however, that because he entertains such sentiments towards you, he will save you, though you continue impenitent. His compassion is not a weak sorrow which interferes with the claims of justice. He pities you as he pitied Jerusalem; if you like it remain impenitent, the sword of vengeance shall descend upon you as it did upon this city; and the remembrance of your Saviour's compassion shall only aggravate your torment, and shall constitute the very hell of hell.

O then in time, weep with your weeping Saviour. Be not insensible to the tears of Immanuel. Let them not find the same hardness in your hearts as they did in those of the Jews. Let the terrors and mercies of the Lord, both of which are presented to you in this event, urge you to turn to him. If these motives do not affect you, religion has no others to offer you, and all that we can do is to mingle our tears with those of our Saviour, in weeping over your destiny.

But if on the contrary, you are now resolved to renounce your sins, and instantly to devote yourselves to the Lord, the church will receive you with transport ; angels will rejoice at your repentance ; the compassionate Jesus will bestow upon you a "peace which passeth understanding," and will at last bear you to the Jerusalem on high, where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, and an everlasting peace dwell in your soul. There you shall forever fix your grateful view upon your Redeemer, and see him surrounded, not as on Mount Olivet, by a company of weak disciples, but by myriads of triumphant saints, with whom you shall join, while they swell the song of adoring praise, and cast their crowns before his throne.

SERMON V.

JESUS LEAVING PEACE TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN xiv. 27.

"*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

THERE is no single event in the life of our compassionate Redeemer, which is not calculated to interest and instruct us. Whether we view him when the people hailed him as the promised Messiah, and shouted hosannas to the son of David, or when they covered him with reproaches, and pursued him with curses; whether we listen to him uttering the severest denunciations against the proud Pharisees, or giving the most tender assurances to the humble and broken hearted; whether we behold him mingling with the rude populace of Judea, that he might reclaim them, or retiring to the mount that, aloof from the world, he might hold sweet converse with his Father; whether we contemplate him clothed with the power of divinity and commanding all nature at his pleasure, or invested with our purest affections, taking little children in his arms and blessing them: In a

word, at whatever part of his conduct we look, we behold a character uniformly bright and glorious; admirable for its perfect combination of every virtue, attractive for its overflowing benignity and love.

But though all his conduct is godlike, nevertheless the last scenes of his life shine with peculiar splendour. In proportion as he draws nearer to its close, his charity appears to burn with a warmer flame, his divinity to shed forth brighter beams through the clouds which enshrouded it. This sun of righteousness, now that it is about to set, emits its mildest lustre, and collects, thus to speak, all its fires. The chapter whence my text is taken, and those immediately succeeding it, confirm this observation. They present to us Jesus surrounded by his dear disciples, on the evening before his crucifixion. He is not ignorant that in a few hours his soul will experience agonies unutterable, and the ground of Gethsemane be smoking with the blood gushing from his tortured frame. He looks at his disciples professing their attachment to him, and foresees that before they sleep, one of them will betray him; another deny him with execrations, and all of them timidly abandon him to sustain his misery alone. He fully knows that he just touches that period, when he is to be scourged, buffeted, spit upon; loaded with curses; when his body suspended between heaven and earth is to be

racked with pain; and his soul, encircled with the flames of divine justice, to be made a sacrifice for sin. In such a situation, the bare idea of which makes us to tremble, what is his deportment? Does he lament his sad destiny, and make loud protestations of his innocence, and execrate the authors of his calamities? Ah no! with a mind serene as the regions of heaven, he looks on these terrible objects; with a resolution fixed and steady as the eternal purposes of God, he advances to meet them. But though thus calm and intrepid with regard to that weight of woes which is descending on himself, he is not indifferent to the miseries of others. His sensibility is exquisitely alive to the sufferings of his disciples, and he seizes with avidity the few moments of liberty which remain to him, to arm them against the sorrows with which they will have to contend. He institutes a simple ordinance as a memorial of his death, and a pledge of his love; he commends them to the guidance and protection of his Father; he animates them by the most consolatory promises; he sustains them by the richest benedictions, and takes a solemn farewell of them in the words of the text:—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

These words may be paraphrased in the following manner; "I am now about to be taken from you,

and your outward situation will be dreadful. Innumerable calamities will assail you. Your conduct in propagating my religion will be esteemed impious; you will be exposed to the bitterest persecutions; many of you will suffer the most cruel deaths. Yet let not the prospect of these evils affright you, nor induce you to decline from my service. To support you under them, I leave you a peace and quietness of mind which external troubles cannot disturb; a tranquillity which will repose in your hearts, and be insuperable by human or diabolical malice. This I call peculiarly *my* peace, because it is purchased by my blood, and applied by my Spirit, and because it is distinct from and superior to those kinds of tranquillity derived from other sources. Your countrymen, whenever they meet or part, exclaim—*Peace be unto you:* With them this salutation is frequently an unfelt ceremony or an impotent wish. But it is not so with myself; for as I sincerely desire that you may enjoy it, so I will be careful that this desire be accomplished." Such is the spirit of these words: the principal truths taught in them will be perceived while we illustrate these two ideas:

I. Jesus Christ gives peace to his followers:

II. He gives it not as the world does.

My brethren, I do not ask your attention: It is surely secured by such interesting words uttered on so interesting an occasion: but I ask, I

beseech thee, merciful Jesus, to afford us thine aid, and whilst we are meditating on thy precious legacy, make us to enjoy it. Shed down in our souls that "peace which passeth understanding," that so our cares and fears may expire in thy bosom.

I. *Jesus Christ gives peace to his followers;* or in other words, he has opened for them sources of tranquillity and joy amidst all the calamities and afflictions of life. "*Peace I leave with you—Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

This will be established if we can prove these two points:

1. He has given us the most adequate supports under all the woes to which we are exposed; and

2. He has bestowed on us positive grounds of tranquillity. That is to say, with the one hand he gives us an antidote against every sorrow, and with the other reaches forth to us the richest benedictions.

1. Look at your life and heart, and you will find two great enemies of peace and tranquillity; *sins* and *afflictions*; and in vain will the heart sigh for rest, till in some mode the sting of sin is taken away and the bitterness of affliction removed. These effects, these desirable effects, are produced by the Redeemer, and by him alone.

While the conscience is burdened by the guilt of sin, and the mind harrassed by the apprehension of that punishment to which it exposes us, we in vain hope for peace—"The dreadful anger of God will crush me if I die in my present situation, and I may die every moment," is a thought that will dash every festivity and embitter every enjoyment. Other miseries are trifling in comparison with this sense of guilt. In the sorrows which proceed from the unkindness and injustice of the world, we may retire within our own breasts, and enjoy that pure and unalloyed satisfaction which results from conscious rectitude: but here the executioner is within us, and it is only by fleeing from ourselves that we can be calm. In most of our other sorrows we see opposed to us, men, weak like ourselves, whom we may overcome, and who at most "can only kill the body, and after that, have nothing else that they can do:"—but here it is the mighty God who appears as our foe; the God "who can cast both body and soul into hell," and make us feel in every atom of which we are composed, torments which shall never end. No, no! there is no other grief that can be compared with the anguish of the soul, that is enlightened to behold the spotless purity and inflexible justice of God, and the depth of the abyss dug by its own crimes and iniquities. The tears that are wrung from us by outward afflictions are extacy, compared to these quakings of the heart that has a true sense of its

guilt. It is absurd then to talk of peace, until in some manner the anguish arising from this source be removed. It is in vain to expect tranquillity, till the mind find something to interpose between its sins and the avenging justice of a holy God. Without this, you may be stupid and senseless, but you cannot have a reasonable serenity. Without this, you may have an air of festivity and joy; but this festivity and joy will be often interrupted by the thoughts of judgment and eternity. "Even in laughter your heart will be sorrowful, and the end of your mirth will be heaviness." (Prov. xiv. 13.)

Where then shall we seek for relief to these torments which arise from a sense of guilt? Where shall the mind, terrified by the splendours of divine justice and the flashes from the infernal pit, find repose and rest? In vain will your thoughts range through heaven or earth for any thing which will afford you solid consolation, except the mediation of Jesus, the mighty peace-maker. "There only can the wearied dove find the olive of peace." Every other resort leaves it full of gloomy doubts and fearful forebodings. But in the sacrifice of Immanuel, we behold all cause of terror removed, and the most satisfying joys presented to our hopes and expectations. Embracing the merits of the Redeemer by a lively faith, the christian no longer feels the stings of conscience; no longer trembles to look through and beyond the grave, but calmly

and cheerfully waits for that period, when he shall be borne into the immediate presence and enjoyment of his God. "It is true," he exclaims, triumphing in the security of the divine promises; "it is true, I am covered with sins and deserving of perdition; but behold my acquittal sealed to me from heaven by the blood of the cross: 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: It is God that justifieth, and who shall condemn?' I see the guilt and baseness of my transgressions; I know how terrible is that tribunal at which I must appear; how strict is that judgment which I must undergo; but Christ has died; he has already washed my soul in his blood, and he will in that eventful day appear as my advocate and deliverer. The prospect of my sins fills me with adoring thoughts of that grace which has justified me, and with deep humility before my God: but it can never fill me with a slavish terror, nor make me despair of the mercy of my Father." Speak for me, believers, and testify that these representations are not exaggerated; tell where you found support when your awakened conscience shewed you the number and enormity of your sins, and pointed to the avenging arm of the holy God, ready to crush you: speak, where did you then find peace and tranquillity? Could you find it in the amusements and gaieties of the world? Alas! in the midst of jocoseness and pleasantry your heart was bleeding. Could you

find it in the precepts of human philosophy ; in the lessons of worldly wisdom ? Human philosophy, worldly wisdom ! alas ! can these wash out the stain of the smallest sin from the conscience ; Can these retain the arm of an incensed divinity when raised to smite you ? Could you find it in the endearments of friendship and affection ? Ah ! powerful as is the voice of friendship in dispelling other griefs ; precious as are the accents of affection to the soul agitated by other disquietudes, yet they both are powerless, inefficacious, in restoring peace to the conscience, oppressed by the weight of its sins, and shuddering with apprehensions of eternal misery. Yes, believers, you can attest that in such circumstances we in vain search creation round for tranquillity ; you can attest that you could find it no where, till approaching the only propitiation, and pressing to your souls the cross red with his blood, you heard him whisper to your hearts in accents soothing yet authoritative : "Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you." Tell, for you have felt it, what joy, what peace, what tranquillity, succeeded to this cheering assurance of our gracious Immanuel ; tell how it changed the voice of sorrow into accents of praise, and enabled you to "go on your way rejoicing ;" tell with an holy triumph, that Jesus has given you peace with your conscience, and blotted out all your iniquities, when the whole world was unable to afford you relief. And

are you the only persons who can witness to this truth? No—speak, for me, ye glorified immortals; ye redeemed of every tribe and nation, who dwell in the regions of blessedness: speak and declare to the inhabitants of earth, that none but that Jesus on whom you gaze with ever new delight, can give comfort to the troubled conscience; that nothing but the streams which flowed from those precious wounds, which you behold shining with glory, can efface the stain of guilt and obliterate every vestige of pollution. Speak, ye that are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and declare from your own experience that this blood can make the soul that was "red like crimson, become white as snow."

Thus then Jesus has provided for his followers effectual remedies against the griefs arising from our *sins*, the first and greatest enemy to our peace: he has been no less careful in affording to them proper supports under those *trials*, those *crosses*, and *afflictions*, of which human life is full, and which we mentioned as the second great enemy to peace.

To comfort mankind under these crosses and trials was one of the principal aims of the philosophers of antiquity. Long before this "teacher sent from God" appeared in Judea, the most vigorous powers of mind and the most incessant application, had been employed in prescribing means to attain

an undisturbed tranquillity of soul. But all these endeavours were fruitless, for grace and not nature, Jerusalem and not Athens, were appointed to teach us this heavenly art. The tear would still flow, and the heart be still wrung with anguish, whether we listened to the haughty stoic who, contradicting fact and the feelings of nature, asserted that there were no evils except in imagination, and that pain existed only in fancy; or to the epicurean who tore away every prop to the frailty of our nature, when he attributed every calamity to a senseless chance. All the schools of antiquity, discordant and clashing in every thing else, were united only in presenting unsubstantial comforts, which were too airy to support those under the pressure of real grief, or else in irritating instead of healing the wounds of the soul. But when we turn from these ineffectual consolations of the brightest ornaments of Greece and Rome, to the divine instructor who "spake as never man spake," what different sentiments are excited! He proposes such grounds of peace and tranquillity, as will hush every painful passion, will compose every rising grief, will drive back every starting tear, or convert it into a tear of joy, and render us not patient merely, but triumphant in affliction. He gives us such instructions concerning the *author*, the *intent*, and the *issue* of afflictions, as, if they be properly realized, will cause the sorrows of life to vanish "like the

morning cloud," and the pains of mortality to dissolve "like the early dew."

Come, children of affliction, let us open his holy volume, let us attend to his sublime instructions, to his tender consolations; and then afflictions will lose their bitterness, and those crosses of whose weight we now complain, will be borne without a struggle or a sigh. Listen, whilst to console us he points to the *author* of these afflictions, and teaches us that they "spring not from the dust," but are caused by the will of God; by the will of our creator who called us into being; of our preserver, whose power constantly exercised prevent us from shrinking back into unconscious non-existence; of our Redeemer, who poured out his blood to rescue us from perdition: by the will of that God, who is immaculately holy in all his conduct, infinitely wise in adapting our circumstances to our situation, unspeakably merciful in all his dispensations towards us, and irresistibly powerful in the execution of his designs. When Jesus thus instructs us, ought not every murmur to be silenced? Ought we not to cry out from the bottom of our souls, "Since my afflictions come from God, from *my* God, whose infinite power is directed by fatherly compassion, I will not repine. Since he wounds me that made me, that governs, and that deserves to govern the world, I will not be

a rebel and revolt against his dispensations. Father, thy will be done."

The divine teacher having thus pointed us to the author, instructs us also in the *intent* and *design* of afflictions, that he may thus afford us a new shield against the assaults of grief. He cries to us—These your trials are indeed painful to nature, but they are salutary for your souls. As they proceed from him who is love, so they are sent in love. This loss, this bereavement, this disease, is ordered by the same heart, and springs from the same rich fountain of mercy, which gave the Redeemer to expire on Golgotha. And shall any affliction then unduly depress us? We who for the health of our bodies take those medicines, which though unpalatable, are salutary, shall we not unless we esteem our souls of less value than our bodies, cheerfully receive those afflictions which God in infinite mercy appoints as medicines to the soul, as admirable means to strengthen our grace and exercise our virtues, to make us quit our eager grasp of the world, and cause us to fix our affections on him who alone can satisfy the capacities of our soul?

And finally, to give us still more effectual remedies against the sorrows of life, Jesus draws aside the curtain which covers the eternal world, and points to that immortal blessedness in which these trials terminate; he tells us that all our sorrows

have a certain, though it may be to us a secret connection with our eternal happiness; that they are such necessary links in that chain conducting from earth to heaven, that if they were wanting, we should either not arrive at those regions of joy, or at least not occupy so high a station there; that these storms of adversity, rude, boisterous, as they are, shall only bear us sooner to the haven of peace, and make us enjoy with greater delight the unclouded and undisturbed serenity of heaven. Ah! christian, ought we, dare we, when encouraged by such hopes, when animated by such prospects, repine at the afflictions of life. Ought we not in the exulting tone of the apostle, to exclaim, "We glory in tribulation; for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

I appeal then to yourselves: has not Jesus given to his followers effectual grounds of security and peace amidst all the afflictions of life? With confidence, with triumph, we pronounce that he has. The power of these supports has been attested in every period of the church. Paul could truly say of himself and his fellow disciples who were upheld by them, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; for we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have

a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And if we descend from the apostolic age to those which immediately succeeded, we see these supports which the Saviour affords, upholding innumerable persons of every age, sex, and condition, enabling them to sing in the midst of the flames, to smile upon racks, to triumph upon the cruel wheel. And even now when we have so degenerated from the spirit of primitive times, how many instances could we produce of the efficacy of these consolations. Ah! how often in visiting the mansions of poverty, of sickness, of distress, have I beheld the christian composed, submissive, even joyous, under those same visitations which filled the impious with the deepest gloom, with unmingled sorrow. How often have I seen the believer in the midst of those woes most oppressive to nature, lifting up to heaven, eyes in which meekness, trust, affection were expressed, and saying with a holy composure, "The cup which my father, my affectionate father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

Yes, we repeat the observation, and we repeat it with exultation, Jesus has given to his followers effectual grounds of security and peace, amidst all the afflictions of life.

Having thus established our first position, and evinced that the Saviour has provided for his fol-

lowers the most powerful antidotes against those sorrows to which we are exposed on earth; it is no less easy to shew

2. That he has conferred on them *positive grounds of tranquillity* so powerful, so cheering, as to be sufficient to keep their souls in sacred peace amidst all the storms of sorrow, with which they may be assailed. He was authorized to say to his weeping disciples, affrighted at the prospect of the woes rushing upon them; he is authorised to say to all those of us who are his real friends, *Peace I leave with you*, because he proffers to us *an intimate communion with God, the influences of his Holy Spirit, and the earnests of approaching glory*: three benedictions worthy of a God; three benedictions sufficient to give a heavenly joy to the soul in the most unprosperous circumstances that can be conceived.

Jesus Christ secures peace and tranquillity for his followers, by giving them an *intimate communion with God.* Yes, this glorious God whose splendours dazzle the eagle-eyed seraphim, this holy God who cannot view sin without abhorrence, condescends, through the atonement and intercession of Christ, to form the most strict and tender ties with us little mortals, with us sinful creatures; and to admit us to the most intimate and delicious intercourse with him. He invites us to the most un-

reserved confidence in him, to the most wonderful familiarity with him; he bids us pour out all our disquietudes into his bosom, assured of finding pity and assistance; he tells us in all our fears and dangers, to flee to him for succour, and rely on him for security: and when we obey these calls, when by often betaking ourselves to God we become acquainted with him; when by frequent prayer, meditation, and other practices of devotion, we "follow hard after him" and attend close upon him, he is accustomed to break in upon the soul with flashes of joy, to warm it with beams of comfort, to breathe into it the inspirations of heaven, to speak peace to the heart and shed through it a thousand consolations: when on our knees before him, we feel our hearts dissolving with love and flowing out to his bosom, we find the rich tide of affection soon rolling back from God to our souls, and bringing with it pleasures which are unutterable. O precious hours of communion with my Maker! O inestimable privilege of fellowship with my God! blest with thee, what more can I desire; enjoying thee, what can I fear! Say my brethren, say, can a man who has these enjoyments be deprived of peace? Can the tempests of earth agitate that steady soul which has an anchor thus fixed in the heaven of heavens, and fastened to the very throne of God? What care, what fear, what inquietude can intrude within that breast which enjoys this delicious intercourse with the

Lord? Look over the whole circle of human miseries, and see if there be one which will not contract itself and shrink into nothing, when we enjoy these ravishing consolations. Is the christian bereft of his wealth, and left a prey to poverty? Can this inordinately afflict him when he can look up to heaven and say—My eternal inheritance is yet unimpaired; my possessions beyond the skies are yet secure; I am yet rich for I have still my God left me, the maker, the owner, the distributer of all things. Is the christian scorned, slandered, contemned by the world? What then, provided he has "that honour which cometh from God only." Esteeming the favour of God, happiness enough without the applauses of mortals, he can look at the world, and smile and pity it. Is the christian left destitute of friends, bereaved of relatives, in solitude and dereliction? Ah! "that man never knew what it is to be familiar with God, that complains of the want of friends while God is with him: He alone is a thousand companions; he alone is a world of friends." Resting our weary head on his faithful bosom, having him and his glorious angels with us, and permitted familiarly to converse with him, what more do we need? Review in like manner those other internal afflictions or outward woes, which assail the children of men—and see if you can select a single one which the habitual exercise of communion with God, will not enable the believer to en-

dure with patience, and perfect acquiescence of soul. Was not then the Saviour warranted to say to his disciples, to those same disciples who were just entering upon a scene of woes, persecutions, and indignities from which nature recoiled, and who most of them were to seal their ministry with their blood; was he not warranted to say to them, "*Peace I leave to you—Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid,*" since he had secured for them that communion with God which could uphold them under every calamity. I say, HE had secured it; for remember, my brethren, that it is only through the atonement of Christ that this privilege was obtained for us. Without this atonement, the holiness and justice of God would have planted round the eternal throne, a barrier more insuperable than the cherubim and fiery flaming sword which guarded the access to the tree of life.

Do any of you, my brethren, regard these representations as visions of fancy, having no existence in real life, or as flights of enthusiasm? Believe me, you deceive your own souls—believe me, many thousand followers of the Lamb, have found in this intercourse with their God, pleasures incomparably greater than those I have described. I appeal to experience for a confirmation of their reality. Not to the experience of those cold, formal professors who abound in our churches, who whilst they attend to the exteriors of religion, neg-

lect to cultivate its inward power; who are desirous of *appearing* holy, and careless of *being* so; who perform with assiduity those duties, in the discharge of which the eyes of men are fixed upon them, but who neglect those exercises which exclude all other witnesses, than God and their own consciences. To the experience of these men we do not appeal; for they are strangers to communion with God; alas! they are strangers to vital religion. But we appeal to those warm-hearted believers, who daily are cementing this heavenly familiarity, by renewing their intercourse with God, who often talk with him in the secret of their closet, and hourly direct their thoughts to their Father and their Friend. Speak, and declare that God deals familiarly with men; draw for a moment that veil with which your modesty has covered the interior of your soul, and shew us that your hearts have been inundated with pleasures which the world can never bestow, which the men of the world can never conceive. We appeal to the noble army of confessors and martyrs, who through communion with God, rose superior to all the fury of men. We appeal to the saints of the old testament and the new, who in an intercourse with God, had heaven let down into their souls, and almost emulated the joys of angels.

Jesus Christ then gives peace to his followers, since he has secured for them communion with God.

But this is only the first of his benedictions. He confers also the *Holy Spirit*, that bond and ligament connecting God and the soul of the believer. This Spirit purchased by the Saviour upon the cross, and conferred through his intercession, by his *enlightening*, his *renewing*, his *comforting* influences, sheds through the soul of the believer a stable and solid peace.

As the *enlightening Spirit*, he presents to our minds those great truths of religion which affect, which interest, and delight us. He removes the veil which conceals futurity, and directs our attention to the eternity of happiness, the perfection of holiness, the consummation of joy which God reserves for his children. He exhibits in a clear and attractive light, the excellencies of God, the perfections of Immanuel. These and the other important truths of religion, he impresses on the believer, not in a cold speculative manner, but so as to excite the highest delight. Tell, christians, how at some favoured moments your souls, under his instruction, have, as it were, leaped beyond the confines of this dark prison of earth, and all-surrounded by light, placed themselves before the throne of the Eternal. You have then fixed a steady eye upon the glory which he unveiled, and filled with admiration and love, have shouted—This glory is mine, given me by the Father, purchased by the Son, applied by the Spirit ; and the current

of time as it rolls along, is rapidly bearing me to the full participation of it. Tell with what extacy you contemplated the attributes of Deity, the graces of the Saviour, when this "Spirit of wisdom and revelation took of the things of God, and shewed them unto you" with an evidence and sweetness, which philosophy could never attain. Tell how at such times, these enchanting glimpses darkened the lustre of earthly joy, made the severest afflictions of mortality vanish from observation, and filled your hearts with that peace which the Saviour here promises to you.

But this Spirit which enlightens, is also the *renewing Spirit;* and how much tranquillity and satisfaction does the exercise of this part of his office give to the soul. To find harmony restored to our irregular affections, to see the passions formerly untamed submitting to the yoke of religion, to behold our native depravity losing its reigning power, and the image of God re-impressed upon us; is not this a desirable, a delightful contemplation? To have a heavenly temper implanted within us, the seeds of glory sown in our breasts, a burning love to the Being of beings, and a tender affection for mankind glowing in our hearts; is not this a state calculated to afford us peace? But these effects are produced in a greater or less degree on every believer, when renewed by the Holy Ghost, he has "Christ formed in him the hope of glory."

And finally, it is part of the office of this same Spirit, by his *consoling* influences, to dissipate the cloud of sorrow, and cause the sunshine of heaven to break in upon the soul. Oh! how often, christians, has he given you "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." How often in times of darkness, of perplexity, of gloom, has he spoken to your heart and said, "Be of good cheer;" how often in seasons of woe and affliction, has he given you a warm feeling of the love of God, a calm hope of your adoption, which banished your sorrow, and made your heart swell with delight. How often when filled with gloomy fears and forebodings, has he by the application of some sweet promise, by recalling some consolatory truth, enabled you to "stay yourselves on the Lord, to rejoice in the God of your salvation." Though he dispenses these consolations in various degrees to different persons, yet there are no christians who do not enjoy them in some degree; and sure I am that no christian would exchange the smallest ray of this divine consolation, for all the combined happiness that has resulted from earthly sources, from the creation of the world to this very hour. Must not then the christian enjoy peace and tranquillity?

Finally, Jesus is ready to confer on believers, and will confer on them, if they be not wanting to themselves, the *earnests of future glory*, the pledges of

eternal felicity. The Saviour offers these to all, and commands us to obtain them; and it is not owing to want of power or defect of will in him, but to our own lukewarmness, if we do not obtain them. Judge now for yourselves, whether he who has complied with this duty and has hopes full of immortality, has not a peace so excellent as to be worthy to be the last bequest of the dying Saviour. He knows that every moment bears him nearer to his Father and his Redeemer; that every pain and sorrow that befals him, is intended and calculated to loosen the bonds which connect him to earth, and prepare his soul to take its flight to the regions of blessedness. And can the sorrows of life be weighty to him who knows that they will so speedily and so gloriously terminate? When his affections and desires form for him a Pisgah, elevated upon which he contemplates the beauties of the promised land, must not all the sorrows of life cease to disquiet him; and can any regret remain to him, except that he cannot at one leap pass over his threescore years and ten, and enter upon his heavenly inheritance?

Thus we have established our first position, that *Jesus gives peace to his followers:* Renew your attention while we shew

II. *That he gives it not as the world does.*

We have already remarked to you that amongst

the Jews the customary form both of saluting a person and bidding him farewell, was by using the words, *Peace be unto you.* The Saviour alludes to this custom when he says, *Peace I leave with you*; but to shew that he does not merely use a common form in a common manner, he adds the remark so worthy of our attention, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." As though he had said, "The men of the world frequently give the salutation of peace to each other without *sincerely* wishing that it may be conferred—I *heartily desire* that you may enjoy it. The men of the world are *unable* to confer the peace which in their salutations they desire for their brethren—my wishes are *not* thus *impotent*; I am abundantly able to accomplish them: The peace of the world is *transitory* and endures but for a moment—the peace which I give will *continue for ever.*" The *insincerity*, the *impotence*, the *transitoriness* of the peace of the world, contrasted with the *sincerity*, the *power*, the *duration* of the peace of Jesus: these will claim your attention in this part of the discourse.

1. When the world exclaims to us, *Peace be unto you*, this exclamation is often *void of sincerity.* A person need only cast a rapid glance over the world, to find numbers, whose words, instead of being the unequivocal interpreters of their sentiments, are in direct opposition to them; numbers, who cultivate with assiduity the execrable art of concealing the

most unworthy designs, by an imposing and affectionate exterior; numbers, who with a cruel dexterity dissemble the emotions of their soul that they may abuse the unsuspecting sincerity of those with whom they converse; numbers, who embrace with seeming cordiality him whose ruin they are meditating; who decorate and adorn with garlands the victim that they are leading to the slaughter. How often whilst the heart is warmed by no tender feeling, whilst it is freezing with indifference, nay, whilst it is rankling with envy, or disquieted by anger, do professions of regard and attachment proceed from the lips. How often are proffers of service and desires for our happiness, uttered by the mouth that has just been employed in stabbing our reputation, and that in a few minutes will load us with slanders and hold us up to ridicule. Such is the world; and he who believing all its professions relies upon it, is just as wise as the man who should attempt to rear an edifice on the light air, or on the yielding waves of the sea. I do not give an exaggerated representation of its insincerity. Those of you will attest its truth who, deceived by vain assurances of affection, by feigned expressions of respect, supposed that you had found warm and real friends; but who in the hour of trial have found these pretended friends, on whose professions and caresses you confidently relied, cold, distant, insensible to the voice of your needs, treacherously abandoning you. Those of you will attest its truth,

who have been the dupes of the men whom you imagined truly attached to your interests; whose confidence has been betrayed by those in whom you supposed it most surely placed; who have found by sad experience, that the professions of the world are generally a stratagem, which self-love employs for the accomplishment of its designs. Yes, my brethren, it is too evident, that when the world, with a flattering voice and a smiling countenance cries to us, *Peace be unto you;* this wish generally comes not from the heart, and is infected with the mortal poison of insincerity.

Disgusted with its treachery, indignant at its falsehood, let us turn our thoughts towards the Saviour. He also exclaims, *Peace be unto you;* he also cries, *Peace I leave with you:* But he gives this peace to his disciples, *not as the world does.* There is no falsehood, no dissimulation in the expressions of his friendship, in the good wishes which he utters—they proceed from a heart which never knew guile, into which deceit never entered. Hating and reproving *every* sin, his indignation was however, peculiarly excited by fraud and hypocrisy; and if he ever laid aside his meekness and gentleness, it was to direct his thunders and pronounce his woes upon the Pharisees, whose outward deportment and language, accorded not with their inward sentiments. "All his promises are yea and amen:" "None ever trusted in him, and were confounded." He

never deceived the hope, he never betrayed the confidence of a single soul that relied upon his assurances and rested upon his word. In thus commending the Saviour, do I assert what is questionable and incapable of proof ? Ah no ! every single believer on earth, every single glorified spirit in heaven, is ready to lift up his voice, and avouch the faithfulness, the veracity, the sincerity of his Redeemer. Believers, tell the unhappy men who have no other reliance than a world which perpetually dupes, deludes, disappoints them, that the Saviour is a friend who will never frustrate their expectations, who will in the hour of trial justify his sincerity by the most clear and unequivocal proofs. Tell them that when in seasons of affliction and distress, the world abandoned you, and forgot all those professions which it so prodigally made in the hour of your prosperity ; the promises of Jesus were not forgotten by him, his declarations were verified by the consolations which he gave you, and the unkindness and treachery of others were forgotten, whilst with the beloved disciple, you leaned on his sympathizing bosom, and there poured out your griefs and disburdened your sorrows. Inhabitants of heaven, ye can declare that during the whole course of your pilgrimage on earth, your heavenly friend ever attested the sincerity of his affection by fulfilling every promise, by satisfying every hope which he authorized you to form, by "never leaving nor forsaking you." Ye

can tell us, that when in your closing hours, you committed your departing souls with all their wants and sins and interests to him, he proved a faithful Redeemer, receiving your disembodied spirits into his embraces, appearing as their Advocate and Saviour before the eternal throne, blotting out all their sins by the precious blood which gushed from his veins upon Calvary, and imputing to them his perfect righteousness. Ye can tell us, that in the land of blessedness in which you dwell, all his promises are fulfilled, all his assurances verified, all your expectations exceeded: and having thus suspended for a moment your adoration, to proclaim to us the praises of your Saviour, ye again will fall before his throne and with renewed fervour exclaim, "Faithful and true are all thy ways, thou King of Saints."

Oh! my brethren, ought we not to seek the friendship of such a Saviour? Amidst the fluctuations and miseries of life, we need some sure support on which we may confidently lean, some faithful friend on whom we may unreservedly rely: an insincere world is not calculated to be such a support, such a friend: an insincere world will act towards us as the treacherous Joab did to Amasa, come with the accents of peace in its mouth, while it is preparing to stab us to the heart: a sincere, a faithful, a guileless Jesus, is such a sure support, such a precious friend.

2. When the world exclaims to us, *Peace be unto you*, it is not always insincere and deceitful; but even when it most strongly desires our happiness, it is *weak and without power to afford us a complete felicity*. Man is feeble, indigent, unhappy. We are subject to so many infirmities, so many afflictions surround us, so many evils assail us, that it is impossible to make the humiliating detail of them; and surely then it is impossible that the world can remove them. Tell me, ye mortals, who are blest with a generous temper, and placed in a situation where you can exercise your friendship by the bestowal of all the favours which the world idolizes; tell me, what are the enjoyments which your friends may expect from you? A little wealth, a little glory, some pleasures, some advantages, which always bear that stamp of imperfection that is attached to all terrestrial objects. This is all that your most ingenious and most communicative kindness can bestow. But, I appeal to yourselves, can this make me perfectly happy, since I have numberless inward sources of sorrow which are not at all affected by these outward blessings? To be happy, the guilt of sin must be removed from my soul, and the reign of sin in my heart be abolished: to be happy, my mind must be enlightened, my soul purified, my affections and passions restored to order and harmony, my will subjugated to the will of God, my eternal felicity secured, and an offended Judge converted into a tender Father.

The aching void in my heart will not be filled, till these effects be produced: Tell me, generous mortals, can you produce them? Can you avert ten thousand other evils which press upon me, and prevent me from being perfectly happy? Oh no! though you say from the heart, *Peace be unto you;* though you sincerely desire that I should enjoy a consummate and unmingled felicity, yet your power, far more limited than your wishes, prevents you from conferring it on me.

Thus unable to find full happiness from the world, shall we, my brethren, entirely despair of attaining it? No, for Jesus *gives peace not as the world does:* his wishes can all be accomplished, for his *power is irresistible.* Raise your thoughts then from feeble mortals to the mighty Saviour. "He is able to do abundantly above what we ask or think." He gives unmingled felicity to angels; can he not satisfy worms? The possessor of heaven and of earth, he can at his will dispose of the treasures which they contain, and from the exhaustless source of his all-sufficiency, can cause the streams of his mercy to flow upon us. With such a protector and friend, what will be wanting to our felicity? He can give us all temporal blessings which are best for us, avert from us every evil, direct us in all our perplexities, sustain us in all our sorrows. He can give us every spiritual favour, every supernatural grace. He can comfort us in

the midst of all our trials, lighten their weight, and abridge their duration. He can give peace and hope to our afflicted hearts and wounded consciences. In every agony that can befal us in life, in our last contest with death, he can communicate to us such joys that our full, our overflowing hearts, will have no other regret left to them, except their inability properly to express their gratitude.

The world is impotent; the Saviour is almighty: this is the second point of contrast.

3. The peace which the world gives, is *limited in its duration.* Inconstant and variable, men frequently change their sentiments and opinions: the same persons who now say to us with affection, *Peace be unto you,* in a little time may become our bitterest enemies. Frequently the slightest circumstances prevent a repetition of those good wishes and tender sentiments, which had been indulged for years. We can never be assured of the invariable continuance of the peace which the world gives us. It is otherwise with that which Jesus gives to his followers. He has engaged never to withdraw his favour, and "to love those to the end whom he has once loved." He changes not, and "his gifts and calling are without repentance."

But even supposing, my brethren, that those who have desired that we might enjoy peace and

happiness, preserved these sentiments while they live; yet the tenderest friendship continues but for a time. The moment must come, in which we must bid a last adieu to those who were interested in our happiness, and to whom our souls were bound; to those who were the dearest part of ourselves, and whose society constituted our joy. You must be wrested from us, tender and faithful friends, and nothing be left to our desolate hearts, but afflictive regrets and a bitter remembrance of having once possessed you. With you will be entombed the peace which you gave, the felicity which you conferred. But for us, what will there remain? What, my brethren? Jesus, our Redeemer, who gives not his peace as the world does: Jesus, who can abundantly replace those whom we weep: Jesus, in whose communion we can find infinitely more than we have lost: Jesus, on whom time and death have no power, since though "he was dead, he is alive again, and liveth forever and ever:" Jesus, who, when the hour of our dissolution arrives, will receive our disembodied spirits, will at last raise our bodies from the dust, will in heaven make us experience his tenderness, and cause us through eternity to enjoy the perfection of peace.

Blessed Jesus! when we anticipate this celestial felicity we acknowledge that thou didst truly say, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you."

Such, christians, is your religion; the parent of peace, a support to the weakness of human nature, a bulwark against external distresses. Cherish it; love it; practise it more faithfully, that you may enjoy more of its consolations.

Such, sinners, is the religion which we invite you to embrace. Do we require too much of you; are we austere, morose, enemies to your happiness, when we entreat you to secure for yourselves these unfading joys?

Such, infidels, is the religion which you oppose. If you have not its consolations, we pity you from our hearts; but if you attempt to wrest them from others, what do you not deserve? A firm belief in it has supported, still supports thousands of your afflicted fellow-creatures. Stripped of all earthly enjoyments, exposed to penury, contempt and bereavement, they have been rendered contented and happy by the gospel of Jesus. Will you strive to pluck from them this, their last, and only solace? Are you not satisfied with seeing them already sinking under temporal calamities, unless you can tear from them their spiritual joys, and deprive them of the hope of immortality? Oh! how often when I have witnessed the last hours of the saints, and seen them departing in triumph, upheld by that peace which their Saviour conferred on them, have I wished that you, unbelievers, might beheld these

scenes with me. I would then point you to the departing christian. I would say to you—See this believer convulsed and racked with pain, straining his dim eyes for the last time upon the objects dearest to his heart, about to be separated from all earthly enjoyments, and to descend to the lonely grave. Yet he is still tranquil; nay, triumphant. The peace of Jesus dwells in his heart, and the religion of Jesus enlightens before him the "valley of the shadow of death." Come now; tear from him these hopes which solace him: teach him that the joys which he anticipates are unreal: tell him that, instead of going to his Redeemer, he is entering into a dark, a dismal, an uncertain future, or sinking into gloomy annihilation. Come, root from his heart those sentiments which fill him with exultation: come, and force him to resign his breath; shivering, doubtful, and appalled.

You would shudder at such a proposal. You would think yourself a monster, a dæmon, if you complied with it. Yet this cruel effect is produced by the propagation of your sentiments. If then you have not this peace yourself, be not so barbarous, so brutal, as to strive to tear it from others.

SERMON VI.

THE AGONY OF JESUS.

LUKE xxii. 44.

"*Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*"

MY brethren; the external sufferings of your Saviour, have often been described to you with energy and force; the cross has been reared in your presence, and you have beheld it red with the blood of your Redeemer: the scourge, the thorns, the nails, and the spear, which lacerated the body of the holy Jesus, have been held up to your view. The remembrance of these sorrows has affected your hearts and drawn tears from your eyes. We come to you to-day to fix your thoughts on another part of your Saviour's sufferings; we mean not to elevate the cross in the midst of you, and shew your Redeemer extended upon it: we wish not to engage your natural sympathy by directing your minds to his wounds and his blood, and by painting to you the cruelty of his executioners. We are to consider the more terrible griefs of his soul—we are to present him suffering, not under the iniquit-

ous sentence of Pilate, but under the awful condemnation of God, who wounds him as our pledge and surety—stricken, not by the ruthless soldiery, but by his heavenly Father. O man, these are subjects which are calculated equally to astonish and console. Let us meditate on them with the most vigorous attention. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus having instituted the holy sacrament, having given to his disciples the most tender consolations against their approaching sorrows, and having offered in their behalf to his Father, a most affectionate and ardent prayer, departs with them from Jerusalem, and crosses the brook Cedron, which flowed at the edge of the city. Over this brook David formerly passed with a small number of faithful followers, when he fled from Jerusalem to avoid the treachery and violence of the rebellious Absalom: the greater son of David now crosses it, not to flee from, but to meet his perfidious betrayer. Beyond this stream, about a mile's distance from the city, was the mount of Olives, at the foot of which was the village of Gethsemane: in this village was a garden, known by Judas to be often visited by the Saviour, and consecrated by his prayers: thither he had often retired after the toils of the day, to hold communion with his Father; thither he now goes to experience woes inconceivable.

Having arrived at Gethsemane, he takes with him Peter, and James, and John, and retires with them to the hallowed garden. It was necessary that believers should know what Christ had undergone for their salvation; and as this was one of the principal scenes of his sufferings, it was therefore needful that he should have witnesses of it. But why were these particular disciples chosen from the rest, for this office? Two reasons may be assigned.

1. It appears from the whole evangelical history, that these three were peculiarly beloved by our Lord, in evidence of which he bestowed upon them only, new and characteristic names; they were as one of the Fathers expresses it, "the elect among the elect." Christ therefore by choosing them to behold and participate in his sufferings, at once gave a strong proof of his confidence and affection, and has taught his disciples in every age this useful lesson: that he leads not his favourites to heaven by a path strewn with flowers, and that a communion in his griefs should be so far from distressing us, that we should consider it as a testimony of his affection.

2. But a second reason of the selection of these three disciples to be witnesses of his agony was, because they were better prepared than the others, to behold this deep humiliation of their Lord, since they only had witnessed his transfiguration. It was

most proper that those who had beheld Jesus upon Tabor, in the majesty of his divine nature, encircled with glory, adored by Moses and Elias, should behold him in the depression of his human nature, distressed, and contemplating only objects of terror and dismay. That they who had heard the illustrious testimony of God, "This is my beloved Son," should also hear the complaints and groans that the Saviour pours out to his Father: That they who had seen his face luminous as the sun, should also behold it cast down with grief, and covered with a bloody sweat. Had this last scene been presented to any who had not been fortified by the first, they could scarcely have preserved their faith unshaken; they could scarcely have avoided doubting whether this were indeed the expected Messiah, whether this were indeed the object of God's paternal love. There was then a peculiar propriety in the selection of these three persons: and happy alike were ye, favoured disciples, when ye saw the glory of the Lord Jesus upon Tabor, and his charity for mankind in Gethsemane; when ye saw there what he was in himself, and here what he became for us; when ye witnessed there the love that the heavenly Father bears to his eternal Son, and here the love which this Son bears to his followers.

The Saviour then having left the greater part of his disciples at the entrance of the garden,

thus convulsed him, who with such firmness met it when clothed in all its terrors? What is then that invisible arm that smites him? What is the cause of that astonishing grief which calls down an angel from heaven to strengthen him, the Creator of angels; which urges those strong cries and tears, and forces from his agonized frame that dreadful sweat of blood?

* There are several causes, which in their conjoined influence, were fully sufficient to produce this wonderful event; we will explain them after we have observed, in order to prevent erroneous ideas, that these sufferings were felt only by the human nature of Christ: the divine nature, possessed of infinite and immutable felicity, cannot possibly be affected by any sorrow or pain. In Christ, the two natures were perfectly united without being confounded or mingled together; and in all his sufferings the divinity did not exert itself, or was operative only in communicating strength to the humanity, to bear what would have been utterly insupportable to any mere man. Its influence on the body was suspended whilst he remained three days lifeless; its influence on the soul is now suspended in Gethsemane.

1. And this intermission of the divine presence,

* See an excellent discourse on the causes of the Agony, by Bishop Browne, from which I have borrowed several thoughts in this sermon.

this withdrawal of the human nature from the ineffable bliss and consolation of his Godhead, we make the first cause of the agony of the Saviour. It was proper that he should undergo this, since it constituted one part of the punishment denounced against the sinner, which punishment was here borne by him. From the weakness of our reason and the feebleness of our powers, we cannot tell the precise manner of this suspension and intermission of the divine presence, nor how it could take place in consistence with the intimate and inseparable union of the divine and human natures. This, with many other mysteries of grace as well as of nature, will not be perfectly comprehended by us till we arrive at the kingdom of light. But though we cannot explain it, a few considerations will shew that it produced misery unutterable. The presence thus withdrawn from our Saviour, is the source of all true joy, the fountain of all real consolation. It is this, which alone constitutes heaven; it is this, which fills angels with extacy, and archangels with rapture; and there is not one of those exalted beings who does not view a single moment's intermission of it with greater dread, than we do the pangs of death, the disruption of the soul from the body. Of this cheering presence, the only fountain of real happiness, Christ was now deprived. This separation from the presence of God, is one of the chief sources of the misery of the accursed. "Depart from me," is the terrible sentence pronounc-

ed upon the inhabitants of the regions of woe.—Though Christ experienced none of that despair which corrodes the soul of these wretched beings, but still preserved his faith and confidence, yet as far as this sentence relates to separation from God, the effect of it was felt by him. Oh! then, how far beyond imagination must his anguish have been! Believers, recur for a moment to your own sensations. Have any periods of your life been half so wretched as those in which the light of God's countenance was eclipsed, and the emanations of his love interrupted? Have the keenest outward sorrows ever given you pains anywise comparable to those felt by you, when the presence of God was veiled from your eyes? After thinking of yourselves, consider those who have made more eminent advances in the divine life, and you will find that in exact proportion to their holiness, is their anguish in losing these spiritual delights, and their fervency in crying out, "Hide not thy face from me, O Lord, for I am troubled." Think then that if men, weak and but partially sanctified, infinitely unable to comprehend the full value of this blessing, having enjoyed it but for a short time and in a small degree, inclined from their natural dispositions to seek for delights from other sources; if these were so deeply afflicted at the intermission of the divine presence, what must Jesus have felt? Jesus, whose holiness was consummate and without spot: Jesus, who knew how properly to estimate

this blessing, and who made of it his only joy: Jesus, who as the uncreated Word had through eternity possessed all the glories of the Godhead and enjoyed the cheering light of his Father's countenance, and who even in his human nature had received the Spirit without measure, and had dwelling in him the fullness of divinity—but who now finds himself emptied at once of what he had forever enjoyed, divested of the ineffable bliss resulting from the full communications of the felicity of the infinitely blessed God. Oh! in vain do the thoughts labour to comprehend the immensity of that anguish springing from such a loss. None but God can conceive the happiness of God; and none but he who knows it, can tell the woe arising from the loss of it. My brethren, of what must our hearts be made if they can remain insensible, whilst considering that love passing knowledge, which for our sakes submitted to agonies such as these. Jesus, compassionate Saviour! when I think of thine outward woes, and bodily pains; groans, sighs, tears are extorted from me—but as soon as I meditate on these the ineffable and mysterious agonies of thy soul, I rise above outward sorrow—and filled with veneration and awe, I wonder, I adore, I am overwhelmed with the consideration of these unfathomable sufferings.

2. But a second cause of this agony was, the burden of those sins under which as Saviour he

laboured. On him was laid the iniquity of us all: he was to become the propitiation for the transgressions of the whole world. Consider but a moment, and you will see how this must have weighed down his holy soul. He perfectly knew the infinite guilt and odiousness of that sin to atone for which he was to be offered in sacrifice. We view it with comparative indifference, because we have such inadequate ideas of its nature: but he clearly saw how loathsome it is in the sight of God, how opposed to his character and law, how base an ingratitude to our heavenly Father, how polluting to our own souls. He beheld the infinite number of those sins for which he was to expiate: each one of them with all its aggravations was present to his view. With what horror and detestation must the contemplation of this vast heap of guilt have filled his holy soul: and how severe must have been the aspect of that infinite justice, how terrible its strokes, which he now was to satisfy to the uttermost. Now it was that "God made him to be sin for us that knew no sin;" now it was that "the arrows of the Almighty were within him, and the terrors of the Lord set in array against him;" now it was that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin;" now it was that the wrath of God flamed against him, standing in our stead, with as much violence as though it had exerted itself in one act against the wickedness

of all mankind. It is true that during all this time he was most dear to God, and that the Father beheld him with peculiar affection, whilst he was laying down his life for the glory of God and the salvation of man. Nevertheless it is certain that the fierce anger of God was exercised upon him. Any apparent inconsistency in these assertions results from our ignorance of the divine attributes: we are apt to suppose that these attributes resemble human affections, and then to imagine contradictions and inconsistencies. The truth is, we know not what anger is in God; we have no idea whatever of the manner in which Christ bore it—but we know that he did bear it although he was the object of the Father's tenderest love. When we consider these circumstances, can we wonder at his agony? He experienced not merely the reproaches, the contumelies, the barbarities of men, but as our Redeemer and Surety, bearing the load of our guilt, he felt the pressure of Almighty vengeance; he felt the severity of that anger before which the mountains tremble and the earth vanishes away; he received in his own bosom all the violence of that indignation which the united constancy of men, and force of angels could not have sustained; he was encircled by those fires which would instantly have consumed any but a divine victim. Ah! could the Saviour fail to be agonized when he here bent under this wrath in the garden, and anticipated

its infliction on the cross? The mere conception of these woes, which outweighed the sins of the whole world, would be sufficient to overwhelm us: could we but have a clear prospect of them, our souls would be filled with astonishment and horror, the consideration of the mighty weight of anguish would make us like our Saviour, sweat drops of blood; our very frames must be dissolved: What mortal or what angel then, can tell the anguish arising from its endurance?

3. We may find a third cause for this grief in the reflections made by Christ, that millions would obstinately neglect his sufferings and receive no benefit from them. He saw that although that death towards which he was advancing, would be a sufficient atonement for the sins of the world, yet nevertheless his followers would be few. Looking down through successive ages he beheld the much-beloved Jerusalem, to which the gospel of salvation had in vain been offered, filling up the measure of its crimes, reduced to ruin by the Roman armies, and its faithless inhabitants consigned to everlasting woe. He beheld those numbers who in every age neglect his grace; those miserable men who in our days trample upon the blood of atonement, despise his full and perfect sacrifice, and aim their impotent attempts against his holy faith. He beheld the countless multitude of open sinners "glorying in

their shame;" of lukewarm professors "having the form of godliness without the power." And now think what sensations would be excited in the breast of the Redeemer by such a view. His concern for the salvation of mankind was boundless; his compassion for our miseries most tender; his wish to rescue us from sin and perdition most strong. Could he, whose love passes knowledge, whose compassion for every one of us was infinitely greater than we can have for ourselves; could he, who more than once wept over perishing Jerusalem; he, whose heart melted with pity even for his crucifiers, and who in the midst of his tortures poured out his prayers to heaven in their behalf; could he view the eternal perdition of so many millions without sorrow unutterable? He alone knew the full extent of this perdition; to him *damnation* was not a word of empty sound; he fully comprehended the agonies of a soul ever gnawed by that worm which dieth not, ever rolling in those flames which are not quenched, ever sinking deeper and deeper in wretchedness and despair. Add to this, that as the Saviour was possessed of infinite knowledge, he beheld these scenes as actually present. He beheld all these transgressors already standing at his bar, already condemned, already sinking in the devouring flames, already exposed naked and unarmed to the lashes of an enraged conscience; already weighed down by the terrible indignation of the Lord God Almighty. What anguish must this

contemplation have excited in the Saviour, especially when he considered that these were the last tears he was to pay to the sad destiny of these unhappy men, since he was now going to re-assume the throne of glory on which no tears are shed, where no sorrow could invade his heart.

4. But the last cause of the agony, was the injections and assaults of evil spirits. This is intimated in several parts of the gospel. After the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Satan is said to have departed from him "for a season;" and in the evangelical history we meet with no period for his return, more probable than this. Christ immediately before entering into the garden tells his disciples, "The prince of the world cometh;" and when apprehended by the Jews says to them, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." These texts seem clearly to imply that Christ had now to contend with the band of apostate spirits. Foreseeing perhaps that his death was to be the expiation of the sins of the world, and that through its merits mankind were to be put in possession of the place which they once held in heaven, they may have endeavoured to terrify him from it, or to render it involuntary and constrained, and therefore useless. At any rate, they would rejoice to glut their vengeance upon him who was expelling them from the bodies, and shaking their dominion in the souls of men. Ah! how keen must have been their attacks when, irritated by

shameful defeats in all their previous assaults, urged on by diabolical malice, having free access to the soul of the Redeemer without the intervention of bodily organs, and dreadfully powerful from their subtlety and long experience in wickedness, they poured in upon him a flood of temptations, and assailed him with evil and afflictive suggestions.

Such were the adequate causes of that dreadful agony which so agitated the mind of the Redeemer, and so afflicted his body, that blood gushed from every pore. Human capacities cannot conceive the extent and bitterness of these sufferings; human language cannot describe them: bowing under them he prostrated himself upon the ground, and poured forth his fervent petitions to Almighty God, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." He does not here pray for a deliverance from the death of the cross, as some have supposed: at the prospect of this he was never daunted; he knew that the prophecies and decrees of God made it irreversibly necessary; he ever rebuked with severity his disciples, when they would dissuade him from it; and, what is conclusive, the apostle Paul (Heb. vi. 7.) speaking evidently of these very supplications says, "he was heard in that he feared;" an assertion that would plainly be untrue, if he prayed for a deliverance from death. The affliction which the Saviour desired to be removed (and

which by a common figure he denominated a *cup*,) was that distress and agony with which he was then assailed; and it was removed, for he immediately became calm and placid and composed.

From the several circumstances of the agony thus considered, we derive many instructions and valuable lessons.

1. We learn from the example of our Saviour, what conduct becomes a christian when under affliction and distress. The christian religion requires no stoical insensibility, no sullen apathy, no haughty contempt of the evils of life. It permits us like our divine master in this event of his life, to feel and lament the infelicities of our situation; to deprecate those calamities which we see approaching; yet notwithstanding it thus condescends to the frailty of our nature, it nevertheless requires that when these afflictive judgments come, we should be perfectly submissive to the dispensations of God; that even whilst our tears flow we should acquiesce in his disposal; that the voice of nature exclaiming, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me," should be mingled with the accents of resignation, "Not my will but thine be done."

2. We learn from this subject how great is the love of God, and the Redeemer for the children of men.—"Now I know that thou lovest me," said

God to Abraham when he prepared to sacrifice to him his son. And shall not we, heavenly Father, acknowledge thy love when for our salvation thou givest thine eternal Son to such infinite tortures. "Behold how he loved him," was the exclamation of the Jews when they beheld Jesus weeping over the tomb of Lazarus; in how much stronger a manner does he attest his charity in Gethsemane, where he sheds tears of blood. Courage then, christian soul! confident of the affection of thy Redeemer, what needest thou dread? By his agony he has taken from you all cause of sorrow; his griefs will fill you with joy, his fears with assurance—He has suffered for you, who shall condemn you? As he is able, so he proves himself to be willing to dispense to you every thing that shall conduce to your greatest happiness and final salvation. He will "make all things work together for your good:" his agony attests that his love to you is too great to deny you any *real* blessing. Courage, christian soul! the recollection of the agony of Jesus will support you amidst all your distresses; though you are poor, sick, persecuted, surrounded by enemies, the remembrance of Jesus in the garden will cheer you, and you will rejoice that you are "counted worthy to suffer with him," that you "may also be glorified together." Courage, christian soul! this is a source of joy which even the king of terrors cannot wrest from you. In the last struggle of dissolving nature, when the vanishing world shall be unable to afford

you support, you shall fix your closing eyes upon the agonized Saviour expiating for your offences, the accusations of conscience shall be silenced; all your afflictions shall cease, and you shall pass from the contemplation of the tortured Jesus, to the arms of Jesus reigning and triumphing in glory.

3. Finally, what can more strongly illustrate at the same time the infinite odiousness of sin and the infinite justice of God, than this view of Jesus in Gethsemane? You know that of himself he is essential holiness; that clothed in his divine glories he was the object of adoration, and the source of felicity to all the blest in heaven; that whilst he tabernacled upon earth he knew sin only to combat and destroy it; that to him that illustrious testimony was given, which re-echoed along the banks of Jordan and resounded on the top of Tabor, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" yet no sooner did he undertake "to bear the sins of man in his own body," than the sword of almighty justice was drawn against even him and was dyed with his heart's blood. My brethren, if God spared not his own Son, what will be our condemnation if we continue impenitent. If we remain without an interest in the Saviour, what asylum, what city of refuge can we find to shelter us against that justice which is so powerful, that it crushes a God-man—so holy, that it punishes in him even imputed sins—so severe, that nothing but his blood and his death could appease

it—so inflexible, that it regarded not the dignity even of the Redeemer.—These are dreadful thoughts; stifle them not, I beseech you, by the cares and delights of the world; you may lead yourselves to forget them now; but they will return with awful force upon your bed of death. At this last hour when every thing will abandon you, when all human succours shall become useless to you, when those delusive blessings which you enjoyed upon earth shall be torn from you, then the sufferings of Christ which might have been your resource, your refuge, your strength, shall fill you with the most lively fears and dismay. You will shudder when you consider this Saviour sacrificed by the same justice which will then cite you to its tribunal; nothwithstanding all the efficacy of a divine blood, it will give no hope to you: and when your soul, torn at last from your body, shall fall defenceless and polluted before the throne of the holy God, what, ah! what will then be your destiny? what will be the inflictions of that justice which here manifested its power and severity by wounding the Saviour? of that justice which will consider the agonies of Christ as aggravating your guilt, and impressing more deeply on your soul the seal of eternal reprobation.

SERMON VII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

LUKE xxiii. 33.

"*And when they were come to the place that is called Calvary, there they crucified him.*"

PAUL, the greatest of the apostles, determined to know nothing except Christ crucified; and even Moses and Elias, when they descended from the abodes of bliss and appeared on the mount of transfiguration, conversed of the decease which the Saviour was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Did each one of you then, my brethren, possess the wisdom and piety of the apostles, the extended capacities and the ardent zeal of glorified immortals, I could find no properer subject on which to address you, than the sufferings of Jesus; I could do nothing of more importance than to elevate the cross in your presence, and shew you the mighty Redeemer extended upon it.

The sacrifice of his Saviour, is an object which the christian should never suffer to escape from his

remembrance; it should at all times be the theme of his meditations, for it is the source of all his comforts, the foundation of all his hopes, the most powerful incentive to the performance of his duties. His mind should therefore often be fixed upon Golgotha, and the doleful tragedy that was there exhibited. But especially on such an occasion as the present, when we have met together to commemorate the dying love of Jesus, nothing can be more proper, than to fix our thoughts and meditations on those final woes which at once most illustriously attested his love and consummated the sacrifice of our redemption. And this is the subject to which our attention is called, for the sole design and the whole division of this discourse, is

I. To review the final sufferings of the Saviour, and

II. To shew you some of the duties, and present you with some of the consolations which result from the contemplation of these sufferings.

1. Then we are to review the final sufferings of the Saviour. We confine ourselves to these last scenes of woe, both because our time will not permit us to detail to you all the afflictions to which Jesus submitted during his continuance on earth, and also, because they of themselves are sufficient to awaken all our sympathies, and to kindle our holiest

the weight of his body continually widens those wounds—tears his nerves, rends the flesh, and causes the most exquisite pain. This pain is not transient; it continues for six long hours; life lingers and slowly departs; drop by drop it escapes him, whilst each moment he feels more than the pangs of an ordinary death.

He suffered then acutely: nevertheless no state can be supremely miserable when we have the pity and condolence of those who surround us. Behold then the crowd which surrounds the cross of the Redeemer, and listen to their expressions of sympathy and compassion: Sympathy! compassion! Alas, I hear nothing but blasphemies and imprecations, but an infernal rivalship in guilt: each is anxious to exceed others in cruelty, in indignity, in wickedness. *Here* one cries, "He saved others, himself he cannot save:" *There*, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." *Here* they exclaim, shaking their heads in scorn, "O thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it again in three days, display now the force of thy victorious arm." *There* that dreadful execration strikes his ears—"His blood be upon us, and our children." Charity of my Saviour, dost thou still endure? Legions of angels, merciful Redeemer, wait only the first signal of thy voice to fly to thy succour. Though apparently weak and feeble, thou holdest the thunders in thine hand; wilt thou

colder than the earth which trembled, more insensible than the dead which started from their graves.

The passion of Christ comprehends his crucifixion and its preparatives :—Of these preparatives we select three only, on which we shall meditate but a short time; his scourging, his bearing the cross, and his despoilment of his garments.

Pilate through the whole of the examination of Jesus, attested his innocence, and declared that he found nothing in him worthy of death. But though his mind was thus convinced, yet he dared not act in conformity to its dictates. Conscious of the crimes that had blackened his administration, fearful of the Jews who threatened to accuse him to the Roman emperor if he released Jesus, yet unwilling to condemn a person of whose spotless innocence even he could not be insensible, he used several expedients to save the life of Jesus, without offending his persecutors. One of these shameful expedients, was the delivery of Jesus to the soldiers, to be scourged by them, that thereby the fury of his enemies might be allayed, and their compassion excited. The brutal and inhuman soldiery, who had long been habituated to murder, and inured to blood, with joy execute the barbarous commission. What a spectacle! The sacred, the tender, the precious body of the Redeemer, is galled and torn by their merciless strokes:

his blood which lately bedewed the ground of Gethsemane, now flows in torrents on the pavement of Pilate's hall; "he is wounded for our transgressions; he is bruised for our iniquities;" that punishment which the Roman laws forbade to be exercised, except upon the vilest slaves, is endured, not merely by a citizen, not merely by a monarch, but by the Eternal Son of God.—But surely, however brutal may have been the hearts of the soldiers, they were satisfied with this exercise of barbarity, they could carry no farther their bitter cruelty: Ah no! it was not enough for them that the body of the Saviour was thus lacerated, they endeavour also to shake the serenity of his mind. They add therefore to these punishments the most keen scoffs and mockings. In the court of Caiaphas the Saviour had been derided as a false prophet, whilst smiting him with the palms of their hands they cried out, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee?" In the court of Pilate he is derided as an ambitious madman grasping at an empty sovereignty. They clothe him with a gorgeous robe, they insultingly place a reed in his hand instead of a sceptre, they form a crown of thorns which they press upon his temples already throbbing with anguish; and having thus equipped him with the ensigns of mock majesty, they jeeringly bow before him and contemptuously exclaim, Hail, king of the Jews! Angels of mercy, why did ye not fly to his

succour! Vengeance of my God, why didst thou slumber!

When the Saviour had submitted to all these griefs, Pilate again brought him before the Jews, hoping that they would be satisfied with the pains already inflicted upon him, and says unto them, "*Behold the man!*" See what I have caused to be done to him; behold him covered with reproaches, and with wounds—is he not sufficiently miserable? you thirsted for his blood—has not enough of it been shed to satisfy you?

But this spectacle, instead of satiating only enkindled more furiously the revenge of these barbarians, and they cry out with more violence, "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." Then Pilate, the timid and criminal Pilate, fearing any longer to oppose their will, yields to their importunity, sacrifices to a worldly policy one whom he had uniformly acknowledged to be innocent, pronounces the sentence, "Let him be crucified;" and delivers him into the hands of his enemies to be led to execution.

Rejoicing at this permission fully to glut their fury upon him, they immediately prepare for his crucifixion. The place of punishment was without the city, and the condemned person was obliged by the Roman law to carry thither the instrument of

death. Behold then the Saviour of mankind bearing his cross on his own shoulders, yet smarting from the scourge. Behold the true Isaac bearing to the sacred mount, the wood on which he is to be offered as a sacrifice to God—He is surrounded by the priests, the rulers of the synagogue, the Pharisees, who pour forth upon him their invectives and curses. He who was worshipped by angels, who was adored by Moses and Elias upon Tabor; he, the Holy of holies, is placed between two robbers, as though he were the leader of them. In this manner he departs from Jerusalem; but overcome by the severities that had already been inflicted upon him, his strength exhausted by labour and want of rest, he sinks under the weight of his cross. But though he thus feels the innocent infirmities of our nature, he murmurs not, he repines not; no impatient word escapes from his lips; no tears for his sad destiny appear in those eyes which had so often wept at the miseries of others. "He goes as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." His enemies, seeing that his strength was almost entirely exhausted, released him from the burden of the cross, and placed it on the shoulders of one Simon, a Cyrenian, whom they met returning from the fields. This conduct, however seemingly humane, was only the result of impatient rage and refined malice. Their fury was so great that they could not bear delay, and they were fearful that he would expire before they arrived at

the place of execution, and that they would thus lose the horrid pleasure of inflicting upon him those tortures which they had prepared for him. Daughters of Jerusalem! well might ye weep at such complicated woe! He had scattered his blessings on your ungrateful city; he had restored to your arms your husbands, your children, your friends, when consuming by sickness, or seized by death: you could not in return rescue him from that death to which he voluntarily submitted; but you bestowed on him the tribute of your tears, the expression of your regrets.

Jesus, having undergone these previous sufferings, arrived at Calvary, where he was to offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Before they fastened him to the cross, they presented to him wine mingled with myrrh. This was always given to criminals before they suffered, in order to blunt the sense of pain and produce stupefaction:—but, says the evangelist, Jesus "received it not": (Mark xv. 23.) He was unappalled by the horrors of crucifixion; he had no need of any other supports than those of his God and his conscience; he wished to preserve his reason and feeling that he might suffer the extremity of pain, and display in an illustrious manner, all those virtues that he requires of his disciples in a season of trial.

Having rejected this offered lenitive, that he might meet death clothed in all his terrors, a new trial succeeds. The merciless executioners despoil him of his garments; they uncover his bleeding wounds, and expose his sacred body to the gaze of the populace. He who "decketh himself with light as with a garment;" he before whom but a few days since the people strewed their garments, that he might triumphantly enter into Jerusalem, now goes from this same Jerusalem, to be despoiled of his raiment before the inconstant and profane multitude. "His garments are taken from him, and for his vesture they cast lots."

The cross is now reared, his arms are stretched out upon it, and they strike the nails deep into those hands that had been employed only in works of beneficence and mercy—into those feet which bore him from city to city, "while he went about doing good," and blessing the nations. Whilst they are thus employed, whilst the sense of his ignominious sufferings is strongest, behold! he raises his eyes to heaven, he pours out his petitions to his Father. And for what does he petition? Does he not ask that the thunders of God should be sent forth, and blast his murderers to endless perdition? No, my brethren, he prays, he pleads for his murderers. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." They know not who it is that they thus revile and torture; forgive them, Father; my arms and my bosom are open to

receive them. Let me be their advocate and intercessor with thee; let that blood which now gushes warm from my veins shelter them from the strokes of thine offended justice. O what hearts must those have been, which could remain obdurate after this tender supplication of Jesus! But the hearts of the soldiers did remain obdurate; and the Maker of all things is suspended between heaven, which is his throne, and earth which is his footstool, as though unworthy to occupy a place upon either.

We have naturally a high sense of shame, and in the most noble and generous minds this sense is the strongest. To be charged with the most heinous crimes; to be viewed with abhorrence and execration by our fellow-men; to suffer a punishment never inflicted by the Roman law upon a freeman however guilty, but reserved for the vilest slave; to depart from earth, leaving our name and reputation covered with ignominy and dishonour; who can conceive the torments inflicted by such circumstances. Yet all this didst thou endure, merciful Saviour. Thy charity could not be satisfied by bearing all the misery that could befal us, unless thou underwentest also all the ignominy which could overwhelm us.

This death then by its ignominy was naturally calculated to wound the mind of the Redeemer; by its painfulness it was calculated to convulse his frame. His whole body is suspended by his wounds, and

pleased :" dost *thou* too forget and forsake me, and withhold from me those comforts which I now so much need to sustain me? What, even *me*, my Father? How many of thy children in the midst of their trials, have been upheld by thy presence and consolations? Hast thou relieved them, and dost thou forsake *me*? *Me*, thine only begotten—thy dear, thine eternal Son? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

O what a voice was this to proceed from the Son of God! Nature trembled at these complaints of its Creator; the sun shrouded itself in darkness, and started back astonished to behold the Sun of righteousness from whom it received its light, setting in darkness and in blood; the earth trembled to its centre; death heard the cry in his inmost caverns, and dropped the chains with which his prisoners were bound, and permitted them to start into life. All nature sympathized with its God; man alone remained unmoved; man scoffed, while angels wept; man's heart remained unbroken, while the very rocks were rent asunder.

Thus Jesus continues suffering till the predestined work for which he assumed our nature is accomplished. When justice is satisfied, when every woe is undergone, and every prophecy accomplished, he calmly, tranquilly, and freely commends his spirit to the hands of his Father; cries in the lan-

guage of triumph, and with a joy which the pains he endured could not destroy, "It is finished;" bows his head, and expires. Thy sufferings are consummated, merciful Jesus, and with them our redemption: God can now be just in saving the rebellious; and the door of heaven which was barred by the apostacy, is again opened for the children of men.

II. And now, my brethren, what effects shall this review of the sufferings of our Lord produce upon us? Shall we be satisfied merely with exercising the emotions of natural sympathy, and pouring forth our tears over our crucified Lord? Oh no! other and more important sentiments should occupy our hearts; for the eternal Son of God submitted to this deep humiliation and woe for far nobler purposes than to excite a weak and idle pity. Even at the moment when he was advancing to execution, he exhorted those who grieved for him to reflect rather upon themselves; and now that he is in the regions of glory he cries to us in much louder accents, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves."

1. Plant yourselves then at the foot of his cross, and let your sympathy be converted into a holy indignation against those sins in which you have indulged. These were the true executioners of the holy Jesus: these rioted in his agonies, and crushed out his life: these kindled those flames that could be extinguished only by his blood; and will you still

practise and love these iniquities? Ah! *dare you* still retain them, and suffer them to reign in your hearts notwithstanding the awful display of God's hatred of them that is given in the tremendous sacrifice of Immanuel? If "God spared not his own Son," will he spare thee, thoughtless sinner, who triflest with the blood of the cross, and cherishest the murderers of Jesus? If sin be not mortified within thee, thou must in thine own person encounter those flames which consumed this precious sacrifice; upon thine own head must descend the thunders which here burst upon the Saviour. Art thou able to endure them? Ah! far better had it been for thee never to have been born, than to fix thy view upon the cross, and yet remain impenitent.

But why, on an occasion which recals to us the amazing grace of God, and in the presence of that holy table where charity is enthroned and pleads with sinners, do I present considerations to appal and terrify? Let me rather urge you by tender motives; let me hope that you will feel the constraints of love: look to the suffering Jesus, and if you are not destitute of every generous feeling, the mercy that is here displayed, must melt your heart, and cause you to renounce and hate all sin. Say to yourself—"Can my sins be as dear to me, as the eternal Son was to the Father? and if for me the Father gave his Son to agonies unutterable, shall I esteem it hard at his command to abandon the ways of iniqui-

ty? When the Son of God has been so gracious as to lay down his life for me, shall I ungratefully retain those sins which he hated more than all the shame and torture which he endured on their account?" Surely, my brethren, if we are not lost to all that is tender, ingenuous or grateful, reflections of this kind must touch our hearts, and cause us to exclaim with the apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again:" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 11—14.)

2. Mourning penitents, approach to the cross of Jesus, that you may obtain the *pardon* of your offences and *repose* to your agitated consciences. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." From the thunders rolling against you from Sinai, seek an asylum on Calvary at the foot of your expiring Saviour's cross. To

the awful denunciation against the sinner, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," oppose the louder accents of Jesus, "It is finished:" the law must be observed, its curse must be executed; but this curse has been borne by me; justice has dyed its sword in my blood; and your redemption is accomplished." Say with a holy confidence, "Is it true that my sins are so many and aggravated, that no created power, not even the angel that stands next the throne of the Lord, no humble and continued prayers, no floods of tears, no years of penance, can remove their guilt? But had I all the sins which are on earth united in my person, still from a bleeding Saviour I could find mercy. Since "it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners," I will not despair. On his grace I will cast my soul: on his cross I will hang my sins and my fears. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole."

3. Children of affliction, look to the suffering Jesus that you may be *comforted in your sorrows, and cheered in your discouragements.* "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." To the infinite mercy which, as God, your Redeemer possesses, is added that sympathy which arises from a participation of your woes. "Since then

you have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted as you are, yet without sin, go boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Are you exposed to reproach and contempt, to the sneers of the ungodly and the scoffs of the wicked? Look to Jesus execrated, derided, and cursed, "scorned and rejected of men." Are you afflicted with inward griefs, with sorrows of soul, with darknes and desertion? Look to him, who "in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto God;" who exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" who in his mysterious derelict-tion upon the cross, cried, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me"? Does the world attempt to terrify you by its violence, or seduce you by its allurements? On the cross you see Jesus undauntedly braving its fury and trampling on its gilded vanities. From the habitation of his holiness he looks down upon you and says, "Thus was I oppressed and tempted; and these my children suffer for my sake and not for their own." Is your reputation slandered by the ungodly? Ah! how much severer were the reproaches that were cast upon the holy Jesus. Are you in a lowly situation in life? Mark the deep abasement of the Redeemer, and bless God for those enjoyments which you possess, and which were denied to him.

Whatever may be your calamities, go to the cross ; there you will learn, as did Paul, to rejoice in your sufferings. There you will learn, as did the first believers, to exult even in tortures and upon racks, to defy the malice and the power of earth and hell.

4. Dying men, look to the expiring Saviour for consolation and direction. Precious as he is at all times, his name is doubly dear on the threshold of eternity. Like him employ the time that may yet be granted to you in "finishing the work which your Father hath given you to do;" like him employ your last moments for the glory of God, for the consolation and instruction of those around you, in prayers for your enemies. Then in your closing hours, you may say—"*Father;* by this endearing name I am emboldened to address thee, through the covenant ratified by the blood of thy Son: *Father* of my Saviour, *into thy hands I commit my* unworthy *spirit:* through Jesus I trust thou wilt receive it as thou didst his holy and innocent soul."

Communicants, when you commemorate the death of Jesus, think then of your own which is rapidly approaching. Since we know not whether some of us will not be in the eternal world before we have another opportunity of celebrating this sacred festival, let us while we hold in our hands the consecrated symbols, commit our souls to

God, and with faith and fervour supplicate his protection, his grace, the application of the blood of his Son, and the manifestation of his love in the last struggles of nature ; so that when Jesus shall come as our judge, and cry again with regard to time itself, "*It is finished ;*" we may rise with joy from our tombs, and advance with humble confidence to his throne.

It would be delightful to expatiate longer on this subject ; it will not be exhausted by eternity itself. But we must pause ; for our Beloved calls us to come and put a new seal to our covenant and our hopes. Yes, we will come to begin on earth the business of heaven, to unite our gratitude with the hallelujahs of the redeemed, and to celebrate that Jesus, who lived among men to bless them, who died to redeem them, who reigns to receive and crown them after their departure from earth.

SERMON VIII.

The CHRISTIAN's VICTORY over the WORLD.

1. John v. 4.

"*Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World.*"

WHILST we remain below in a state of probation, we are surrounded by numberless and powerful spiritual enemies. The adversary of souls attempts to delude us; our corrupt inclinations estrange us from God; and the world spreads before us a thousand snares and temptations. These enemies we are unable to vanquish whilst we continue in our natural state; but when we are "born of God;" i. e. when a new and divine principle is implanted within us, when we are regenerated by the Holy Ghost, we can then triumph over them. My text confines me to an examination of the believer's conquest over one of these enemies, *the world;* and in illustrating it, we will

I. Consider the manner in which the world assails the christain; and

II. The mode in which he repels these assaults.

I. The world assails the christian by its evil example, by its false maxims, by its pleasures and caresses, and by its persecutions and frowns.

1. The effect which the world often produces on the christian by its *evil example*, is most lamentable.

Our manners and our habits are almost entirely formed by imitation; example always addresses us in a more forcible and persuasive manner than naked precept; when models are continually before our eyes we can scarcely avoid copying them. How difficult then must it be for the believer to preserve in the midst of the world the holiness and purity of the christian character! He looks around him, he beholds the multitude uniting to give a fashionable air to vice and folly, and the few who have seriously awaked to a sense of the value of their souls, and who strive to conform their lives to the precepts of the gospel, and the example of their Saviour, sneered at for their preciseness and scrupulosity; is there not danger that he may insensibly be drawn in the current and carried away by the stream? Is there not danger lest a dread of shame, a fear of singularity, a desire to please those with whom he associates, an apprehension of "the world's dread laugh," should induce him to allow many things in himself and others, inconsistent with the strict requirements of religion?

He still has in his heart passions ready to be inflamed; can he with safety be constantly conversant with those objects calculated to enkindle them? When he sees thousands walking in the path of sin and folly, and among them many who though unregenerate are possessed of the most brilliant and attractive qualities; many who though they are destitute of true religion, have those amiable dispositions and moral virtues which secure his love; many to whom he is united by the sacred and powerful ties of nature although they are strangers to piety; when he sees this crowd preceding him, will not his apprehensions of treading in the path which they pursue be diminished?

The history of millions, perhaps the history of our own lives, proves that such fatal effects may be produced by the example of the world. The sons of God saw the daughters of men and were polluted; the people of Israel saw the Midianitish women, and were ensnared. Oh! how many have I known who when they first began to mingle with the world trembled at a thousand excesses which they beheld, and who would have repulsed with indignation the suggestion that they could ever participate in them. But after frequently hearing the sentiments and becoming accustomed to the conduct of the wicked, the delicacy of their conscience was lost, the scruples which they first felt vanished; a deadness of spirit and a decay of grace was insen-

sibly produced, and fearing lest they should be esteemed misanthropes and haters of joy, they have adopted those habits and practices of their seducers, from which they once revolted with holy indignation. If conscience sometimes woke from the lethargy in which they had cast it and uttered its reproaches, they looked around and silenced its voice by the consideration, that they acted as the world did, and conformed to the custom of the age. In vain did the word of God call to them not to be "conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds;" in vain did it tell them that "the world lieth in wickedness;" and that the broad path of the multitude leads down to the chambers of eternal despair—unalarmed by these calls they coolly prosecuted their course; the very circumstance which ought to have terrified them, I mean the countless numbers who lived as they did, calmed their apprehensions; they were surprised by death in the exercise of no christian graces, and borne to that holy tribunal where the world which they had idolized would avail them nothing.

So dangerous, so fatal, is the example of the world. Exercise a holy vigilance against it, and be assured that it requires no small degree of grace effectually to resist it. There are but few Noahs who can be entirely surrounded with sinners without impairing the firmness and purity of their faith:

there are but few Lots who can preserve the vigour of their piety in a city deluged with iniquity: there are but few Daniels who, alone in a mighty empire, can be kept from the pollution of irreligion. Be therefore guarded, believers; exercise a sacred jealousy over your hearts.

2. The world assails the christian in another manner. By *its false principles* and *loose maxims*, it endeavours to shake his faith and corrupt his religion.

The men of the world are solicitous to justify the conduct they pursue and to defend the cause they have espoused; and they therefore employ their arts and solicitations to weaken a regard to serious godliness. When the christian studies his religion in the secret of his closet and the silence of the passions, he perceives that the "commandments of God are exceeding broad;" that in his life and conduct there are many things which need correction; that it is necessary for him not merely faintly to wish and coldly to desire, but to agonize to enter into heaven. But when he mingles with the world, he hears sentiments more relaxed and favourable to corruption constantly advanced, and frequently maintained with all the arts of insinuation and all the graces of manner. He hears incessantly perversions of the scripture, and is warned in the tone of affection but with a treacherous design, of

the danger of being righteous over-much; he hears allowances made for human depravity which the holy volume does not authorise, and the qualifications for future glory reduced to a far lower standard than it sanctions; he hears honourable names given to sin, and finds piety confounded with superstition and enthusiasm. When he frequently listens to these and similar opinions that prevail in the world; when he beholds them adorned with all the colourings of seduction; when those who have the art of "making the worse appear the better reason," continually attempt to lead him into error, to put ornaments upon vice and to varnish falsehood, is there not danger that he may lose the correctness of his principles and the warmth of his piety. How difficult for any one to return uninjured from such impure conversation. How dangerous is such intercourse to young and unwary minds, which are often deeply penetrated with the poison before they suspect the danger of its being administered. How much fortitude and resolution, how much spiritual wisdom and discernment, does it require, to resist the importunities and solicitations of the world, and to unravel the subtlety of those who "lie in wait to deceive."

Testify to the force of this assault, all those of you who were in some degree awakened to a sense of your misery, but who returning into the world were lured back into sin by the sophistry of the

ungodly. Testify to its force, all those of you who once lived in close communion with God, but who have embraced sentiments that have chilled your devotion and frozen your zeal. Testify to its force, ye countless thousands of miserable beings, who were seduced to the adoption of fatal errors with regard to duty and conduct, and who have been led by them to the regions of despair.

3. The world proves an enemy to the believer, by its *promises* and *caresses*. It displays before us the forbidden fruit of its pleasures, its riches, its honours. It presents them to us by the hand of some Eve, flattering and agreeable to the senses: it says to us with the most ensnaring accents, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." How hard is it on such occasions to keep our eyes steadily fixed on the glories of heaven, and to answer the seducing world in the indignant language of Peter, "Thine enjoyments perish with thee!" Instead of resisting the weapons which are used, we are pleased to be wounded by them; we rush with a willing eagerness upon their point. Instead of dashing to the ground the cup of poisonous sweets which it offers, we greedily seize upon it and drink our death. Oh! how many have the allurements of the world undone! How many, like Demas, captivated with its glittering charms, have forsaken their Saviour, and lost their heaven! How many christians between whose

hearts and God it has interposed, eclipsing the light of his countenance, and the beamings of his grace!

There are many considerations, which prove the tempting and pernicious influence of worldly enjoyments. They are suited to our natural appetites, which they first excite and gratify, and then inflame and render inordinate and excessive. A certain measure of them is lawful; but how difficult is it to mark the boundary line distinctly, and keep them in a just subserviency and subordination to the great end we have in view. Nay, a certain measure of them is necessary—"Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things;" and he hath therefore made it our duty by conscientious labour and lawful industry, to seek for them; and yet we are forbidden to suffer the world to have dominion over our hearts: and how hard is it to labour for it, to pursue it, to see its charms spread out before us, and apparently within our reach, and yet not inordinately to love it.

But nothing perhaps can so strongly prove the dangerous influence of worldly enjoyments, as the conduct of Divine Providence towards the children of God. We sometimes see, it is true, those who are surrounded with earthly enjoyments devoted to God. But such instances are comparatively rare. In general, we find that worldly prosperity intoxicates the mind, and that few are able to bear it with so-

briety and moderation; and if the real christian is surrounded by earthly blessings, a variety of correctivestrokes of a different kind, is found necessary to counterwork their influence.

4. The world assaults the believer by its *persecution* and *rage*, by its *injuries* and *scoffs*.

In the first ages of christianity, the path to heaven was a path of blood, and believers were called to bear their testimony to religion on the rack and in the flames. Through the mercy of God, we need not now fear such sufferings; yet still the christian is often loaded with the scoffs and sneers of the ungodly. True vital religion, not being generally embraced, cannot expect to meet with general approbation. Indeed there is something in the genuine christian so opposite to the spirit and maxims of the world, that it is not surprising he should be often treated with derision. Besides, believers are often obliged by the irresistible call of duty openly to declare their opposition and abhorrence of things sanctioned by the world; and if by such conduct they do not reform, they inflame, they irritate, and excite the enmity of the ungodly. And even if he attempts nothing directly, yet the life of every strict and conscientious christian is a constant reproach upon the careless or more dissolute lives of those with whom he is surrounded. It, as it were, flashes light upon the dark and sleepy conscience; it disturbs the tranquillity of the impenitent; and if it

does not reform them, it causes them to regard the believer as a troubler of their joy, and to view him with resentment or contempt, or with a mixture of both. How hard is it to bear such treatment with patience and resignation? How many whose good resolutions have been shaken by the mockeries and insults with which libertines have treated the pious; by the malignant and diabolical pleasure with which they have seized upon the smallest failings of the believer, and held them up with bitter scorn and wicked exaggerations to the public gaze? How many who, afraid of the railleries and scoffs which attend an inflexible adherence to duty, have abandoned that firm and independent deportment which becomes the christian—have striven in almost every point to accommodate their conduct to that of the world; and have endeavoured by means which wounded their conscience and marred their peace, to diminish the contrast which ought ever to subsist between the lives of the pious and of the impenitent.

Such are the chief modes in which the world assails the believer; and who of us can reflect upon them without being filled with a holy fear and apprehension, with a trembling sense of his danger, and with a deep persuasion of his need of divine aid, to overcome an enemy who attacks us in a manner so powerful and so various? But be not discouraged, believers; the world has been conquered by your Saviour, and through his grace *you*

may also triumph over it. This we are to prove to you in the

IId. Division of our discourse.

When the apostle says that those who are born of God overcome the world, he does not mean to assert that they are never sensible of its assaults and never injured by them. God, no doubt for reasons infinitely wise, though perhaps inscrutable by us, has thought proper to leave believers but partially sanctified whilst they are in this world, and to suffer the remains of depravity to dwell within them. In consequence of this state of imperfection, the world may sometimes obtain a momentary triumph, through the weakness, the errors, or the unguardedness of christians; but these defeats are only temporary; in the habitual temper of their souls and conduct of their lives, the children of God have a mastery over the world. They cannot remain under the dominion of their adversary; they quickly rise from their defeats more watchful and more guarded; they resume their combat in the strength of the Lord, and persevere in it to the end of their lives.

When the apostle says, that "he who is born of God overcomes the world," he does not mean to assert that all christians have obtained equal advantages over this enemy. In some, the christian graces

are more weak and feeble; they have not often used their spiritual armour, nor acquired strength from a long and successful contest. Their course is therefore less brilliant; they have to mourn over many humbling defeats; and their lives, too unsteady and wavering, afford little comfort to themselves and little benefit to others. Others, more firm, more animated, and more prudent, hold on a steady course; each day gain some new victory over their foe; and give a brilliant example to the world. But though there are such different degrees of victory, they all of them are superior to the world.

The weapons which they use are correspondent to the assaults that are made upon them. When they are assailed by the *example* of the world, they oppose to it more dignified, more illustrious, more holy models of conduct. They ascend by their thoughts even to heaven; they behold there the all-perfect God, and they resolve to imitate him as far as a creature can imitate its Creator. They meditate on the spotless character of Jesus; they resolve to follow his footsteps and conform themselves to him as far as human weakness, strengthened by power from on high, will enable them. They contemplate the innumerable society of angels, the first-born, the most glorious part of creation; they trace the long succession of patriarchs, of prophets, of apostles, and martyrs; they remember their pious friends who once fought under the banners of

Jesus, and who dying in his love, now rest from their labours; these they choose as their patterns and select as their guides: When the world accuses believers of singularity in their sentiments and conduct, they point to these illustrious models; they cry with a holy triumph—"No; we are not singular: our faith and our practice is approved by God, the Redeemer, and the holy angels; the path in which we tread is that which has been traversed by all the redeemed, and which will be pursued by all who shall succeed us to the consummation of all things. These we have chosen as our eternal companions; these we take as our models; and we equally pity and wonder at the folly of those who would prefer the example of the impenitent and the unholy; of the slaves of Satan and the heirs of perdition."

When the world assails the believer *by its false sentiments and relaxed maxims*, he opposes to it the law and the testimony of God. He feels that it is infinitely more safe and happy to follow the precepts and directions of him who cannot err, than to listen to the pleadings of the passions or the sophisms of iniquity. He acknowledges but one law-giver, that is God; he knows that whatever is imposed by this law-giver is just and right, and that at his bar our eternal destinies will be decided. He therefore cries to the scoffing worldling—"Your silly jests and impious sneers may now harden you in guilt

and drown the reproaches of your conscience; but they will not support you on the bed of death, they will die upon your trembling lips when you stand at the bar of your God. For my part I take the holy volume as my rule, as a lamp to my feet during my life, as a supporter in the hour of dissolution, as the standard to which I must conform my life, since by it my future doom must be fixed. Prove from it that a worldly, careless, thoughtless life, is safe or happy; and I will then acknowledge the justice of your maxims and the wisdom of your conduct."

When the world assails the christian by its *pleasures*, he opposes to these pleasures those that result from communion with God, and those that are reserved for the pious beyond the grave. He feels that the pleasures of religion are the only ones that can fill the capacities of his soul, and that are coeval with its existence—the only ones that accord with the sublimity of his hopes and the grandeur of his destination. Whilst he contemplates those enjoyments of which the glorified partake, the joys of earth shrivel into insignificance, and he is astonished at the stupidity of those, who for the meagre and unsatisfactory pleasures of earth, barter away a felicity infinite in degree, and eternal in duration.

When the world assails him by its *persecution* and *fury*, he is supported by a consciousness of the

approbation of God, and by the silent applause of his heart. He knows that God beholds him, and for wise and benevolent reasons permits that he should undergo these sufferings; he knows that this tender Father stands by him, sees him contending with sorrows for his sake, and "will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able to bear," but will "make all things work together for his good." He remembers that he treads in the path in which Jesus went before him, and he hears the consolatory voice of this gracious master saying unto him, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer—I have overcome the world." He remembers that the crown of glory is just before him, and anticipates the time when, like Moses from the top of Nebo, he shall look back upon all the dangers and sorrows of the wilderness; and from this retrospect enjoy with greater delight the unclouded and undisturbed felicity of heaven. Supported by these hopes and animated by these considerations, he repulses this last assault of the world, and overcomes this foe.

In concluding this discourse, let us

1. Seriously examine whether we have obtained this victory. Without it we in vain hope for heaven; for "if any man" supremely "love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If there is any earthly object that we are not ready to lay down as a sacrifice, and to reject as a snare, when it comes in

competition with our duty to God, he does not possess the first place in our hearts. Solemnly then enquire whether you have obtained the mastery over this foe, or whether you are bound by its chains. And in order to decide this question, see whether you have a living, practical, efficacious *faith ;* for you are assured by the apostle, in the words immediately succeeding the text, that " this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." If then you are actuated only by natural principles, if the Holy Spirit has not implanted in your souls that faith which purifies the heart, which shews us the infinite importance of everlasting things, and endues us with supernatural power ; however painful may be your exertions, however severe your struggles against the world, you are yet its slaves, and shall perish with it.

2. How small is the number of the children of God. Look around you : how many do you observe who, instead of regarding this world as an enemy, view it only as a friend, and consider themselves happy merely in proportion as they acquire its enjoyments : how many, the sole object of whose life is to procure the blessings of earth, and who unrestrained by the fear or love of God, are ready to commit any crime to attain the object of their wishes : how many, who though impressed in some degree with the truths of religion, yet fluctuate perpetually between God and the world, and

refuse to give him the undivided throne in their hearts. All these, we are assured by the unerring oracles of truth, shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven: and do not these compose the greater part of our race? Unhappy men! who for fugitive and unsubstantial pleasures, which cannot perfectly satisfy them even here, which cannot diminish their pains and apprehensions on the bed of death, which make no provision for that eternity which is before them, which cannot interpose between them and everlasting perdition when they close their eyes upon the earth—Unhappy men! who for such trifles renounce those pure and holy delights, which remorse never embitters, which death cannot impair, which will grow and expand throughout eternity. Stop for a moment in your career to ruin; seriously contrast all the blessings which the world can give its votaries, with those treasures of grace, those merits of Jesus, those influences of the Spirit, those splendours of glory, with which God crowns those who choose him as their portion. Between these make a deliberate election; and in deciding remember that you will have a whole eternity of joy, or a whole eternity of misery; in which you will have to felicitate yourselves for the wisdom, or curse yourselves for the folly of your choice.

3. Let this subject induce you, believers, to live near to God. You have been told that you stand not by your own power, but by that "faith which is

the gift of God." Pray then continually, that this grace may be strengthened in you :—Look to your interceding Saviour, and implore him to plead for you, as he did for Peter, "that your faith fail not."

You have been told of the numbers whose conduct once excited the hopes of the pious, but whom the world overcame—Their histories are beacons to warn and direct you : Beware, lest the succeeding generation should have reason to unite your name with theirs, and point to you also as a sad monument of the power of the world.

SERMON IX.

MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

HEB. i. 14.

"*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?*"

MAN stands at the head of the visible creation, and serves to connect two widely different orders of being. Compounded of body and soul, by his *body* he bears an affinity to the beasts that are not endued with an immortal spirit, and by his *soul* to those superior intelligences, who are not united to matter, nor encumbered with body.

That such intelligences exist, reason, or the remains of a primitive revelation, taught every people that has ever lived. Differing in almost every other subject of belief, nations of every climate and age, and religion, have nevertheless concurred in acknowledging that between us and God, there are innumerable orders of spirits, far excelling us in every natural and moral quality. The universality of this belief, is a strong presumption of its truth, and of its consistence with reason.

Indeed, it would appear almost impossible for any person who had with any attention examined the works of God, and observed the various gradations of being, to doubt of the existence of angels. We ascend, step by step, from dull, inert, unorganized matter, to the living plant, the perceptive brute, and the reasonable man. And having risen to an immaterial substance, endued with such powers and faculties as the human soul, shall we suppose that the great scale and gradation of being ends there? Will we not feel ourselves compelled to believe that between us and Deity, numberless creatures intervene, possessed of perfection, power and excellency, beyond our present conception?

But we are not left on this subject to the dim lights of unassisted reason. The holy scriptures are full of proofs, not merely of the existence of angels, but also of their care and watchfulness over the pious, of their fellowship and communion with the saints. Nothing can be more explicit on this point than the words of our text, in which St. Paul, speaking of the blessed angels, says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" Though the apostle here uses the interrogatory form, he does not by it intimate any doubt of the truth of the question which he asks, but only designs by this mode of speaking more strongly to affirm it, more pointedly

to appeal to the general belief of the Hebrews and their own knowledge of the scriptures.

This subject, my brethren, though so much neglected, is worthy of our serious attention. Since God has revealed to us that by his orders the heavenly host defend, instruct and support his children, we must surely be ungrateful if we do not sometimes meditate on this glorious privilege, and render our thanksgivings for it to our heavenly Father. And besides, we must be regardless of our own comfort, and indifferent to our own felicity, if we do not strive to obtain a constant persuasion and a deep sense of a doctrine so calculated to console us in our sorrows, to quiet our fears, and to animate us to diligence in our christian course.

I well know that on this subject many persons have substituted the impulses of imagination, in place of the cool deductions of reason, and the sacred lights of revelation. I well know that many persons, "desirous to be wise above what is written," have when speaking of the heavenly host, delivered opinions, not only unsupported by the scripture, but inconsistent with its holy teachings.—I well know that it is a subject which has often excited the pitiful sneer of the modern Sadducee and conceited unbeliever: But I know also that these considerations should not deter us from a sober ex-

amination of this precious truth. God has not revealed it for no purpose: he has not written it down in the holy volume with a design that we should never attend to it; he expects our gratitude and adoration for this proof of his paternal affection and goodness: we are therefore bound to enquire into the nature of this angelic ministry. And besides, according to the judicious remark of Dr. Owen, "we have the word of God for our way and guide; and if we go not *beside* it, and if we go not *beyond* it, we are as safe when we treat of angels as when we treat of worms."

In illustrating this subject, we will

I. Examine the names, number, and perfections of the angels;

II. Enquire into the extent, duration, and nature of their ministry; and

III. Point out some of those practical lessons which result from this doctrine.

I. The *names* bestowed upon these high intelligences are indicative of their nature or occupations; it is then proper to begin with an examination of them. One of the most common names given to them is *angels*, the primitive meaning of which

word is *messengers;* it therefore denotes the office to which they are appointed, of carrying on the intercourse between God and his creatures. They are called *spirits*, to shew that they are incorporeal and not naturally subject to dissolution; *seraphim*, from a word signifying to *burn*, in order to express their fervent zeal and ardent love; *cherubim*, of the derivation and precise meaning of which term there is much doubt; *watchers*, (Dan. iv. 13.) to display their own vigilance and their care in exciting others; *morning-stars*, (Job xxxviii. 7.) from the splendour of their nature, the brightness of their knowledge, and the earliness of their creation; *sons of God*, (Job xxxviii. 7.) not by adoption, like the pious; much less by eternal generation, like the blessed Redeemer; but because they bear the impress of the perfections of God; *thrones*, *dominions*, *principalities*, and *powers*, (Col. i. 16.) because of their high dignity and elevation.

These are the most common names whereby they are distinguished in holy writ. As to their *number*, it is almost inconceivable. Our Lord speaks of "more than twelve legions" who would instantly fly to his succour if he required it: (Mat. xxvi. 53.) Daniel beheld "thousand thousands" ministering to the ancient of days: (Dan. vii. 10.) St. John in prophetic vision saw "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands:" (Rev. v. 11)—and St. Paul who had been caught up to the

third heaven, attempts not to reckon them up, but calls them an "innumerable company:" Heb. xii. 22.

The capacity of their minds, and the degree of their knowledge, exceed, inconceivably exceed those of our feeble and short-sighted race. No prejudices nor passions pervert their judgments, nor disguise from them the truth. No cumbersome body, fatigued with the intensity of their application, interrupts their meditations, nor obliges them to intermit their researches. They live in the region of light, and there contemplating God, the eternal source of truth, they behold truth itself, unveiled and unclouded. They have existed for many thousands of years—they have beheld not only a great part of what has been transacted on this our world, from the period of its creation, but also what has been done in the other parts of God's dominion. To what a point then must the most extensive human knowledge be contracted when compared with theirs!

If they thus shine with light, they *also burn with love*. It is all their employment and all their felicity to admire, adore, serve, and imitate God.—There is no moment of their existence in which their souls are not penetrated with a rapturous and adoring sense of his glory and excellence; in which they are not overwhelmed with gratitude for his mercy and goodness. Their hearts are so many altars flaming by day and by night with the most

intense love, with the most elevated devotion. Losing themselves in the contemplation of the works and attributes of God, absorbed thus to speak, in the Eternal All, they continually cast their crowns before him and prostrating themselves at his throne, exclaim in holy extacy, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto God forever and ever. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints."

These sublime intelligences are also endued with *power* which, although limited, is yet far, very far superior to that of the mightiest mortals. David teaches us that they "excel in strength;" (Ps. ciii. 20.)—and St. Paul terms them, the "mighty angels;" (2 Thes. i. 7.)—The scriptures abound with the most striking examples of their power. Here we behold one passing through the land of Egypt, and in a single night destroying the first-born of every family, from that of the imperial Pharaoh to that of his meanest subject. (Exod. xii. 29, 30.) There we see another in the same short period exterminating the army of the proud Sennacherib, and delivering Israel, by bringing to the tomb an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of its furious and malignant enemies; (2 Kings xix. 35.) Every where, in short, we find them exerting the most wonderful strength for the protection of the pious and the punishment of the ungodly.

These angels are *immortal*, and will never cease to exist. Of this we are assured by the Saviour when he tells us, that the pious, after the resurrection, "cannot die any more since they are equal, or like unto the angels :" (Luke xx. 36.) These exalted beings are creatures; they therefore began to be, and owe their existence to God; but being made pure spirits they are not naturally subject to dissolution; and being perfectly holy they need not dread that death which is the wages of sin. Whilst one generation of mortals succeeds to another, they still survive; they were living when the Almighty first fixed the sun in the heavens; they beheld the first rays that it shed forth, and saw time begin its course, and they will still exist to behold the sun and the moon torn from the skies; to behold time swallowed up in eternity. They were living when God first infused the vital spirit in our great progenitor; they saw him open his eyes upon the light and close them in the tomb; they have beheld the uncounted millions of his posterity flitting in succession over the scene of life, and giving place to others as transient and unsubstantial as themselves; and they will still live when this world the residence of mortals, and these material heavens on which we gaze, shall be consumed together; they will live whilst eternity endures; they will live forever and ever.

These blessed spirits are most *agile* and *active*,

We find them in the scriptures in an instant descending from heaven to earth, or returning from earth to heaven. We find them performing with a celerity almost inconceivable, the most stupendous works. Unimpeded by these clogs of flesh, unrestrained by this dull and sluggish matter to which we are united, they fly to perform the divine will with a velocity far superior to that of the rapid lightning; with a velocity of which nothing can give us any conception, except perhaps it be the fleet glances of the human mind which in an instant can reach to the bounds of the universe.

Finally, these angels enjoy a *consummate felicity*. How can it be otherwise, since their faculties of enjoyment are so vast, and the objects to be enjoyed so glorious and inexhaustible. How can it be otherwise since they are encompassed by the love of God; since from the exhaustless source of his all-sufficiency, this God pours upon them that full ocean of delights, some drops only of which when shed down in the hearts of his children on earth, give them an anticipated heaven.

But though these exalted intelligences are thus happy, though seated on the Rock of ages they feel no anxiety or distress, yet they are not indifferent to the happiness of mortals; they extend their sensibility and their views to this unhappy world where sin and sorrow prevail; they leave the

climes of bliss, and with joy fly hither to execute the commands of God, and minister to his children. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

We are to consider the reasons, the extent, the nature, and duration of this their ministry in the

II. Head of our discourse.

1. As God by his word alone originally produced all things, so he could govern them by his word alone, without using the instrumentality of inferior agents. It is not then through weakness or necessity, but for reasons full of wisdom and goodness that he employs the ministry of angels to accomplish the designs of his providence. He does it to honour the angels by making them, in the strong language of the scripture, "workers together with him." He does it to give to his children an examample of obedience which is calculated to inspire them with a desire to do the will of God on earth as it is done by the angels of heaven. He does it to console and cheer the pious by shewing them that he is so attentive to their interests, so careful of their felicity, as to employ his own glorious retinue for their benefit and support. He does it, that by the bestowal and reception of good offices, the ties that will forever unite angels and believers, may be more closely cemented. He does it to promote the

harmony of the universe, by connecting together in the tenderest bonds superior and inferior creatures, things visible and invisible. He does it for the manifestation of his own glory and greatness, which are displayed by the alacrity, the joy, and zeal, with which such noble and exalted creatures fly at his command. He does it to shew the dignity and elevation of Jesus Christ. This blessed Saviour is exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come;" (Eph. i. 22.) and is made the prince, the head and the governour of the angels. If then you are but little affected when you consider Jesus as the head of the church on earth, raise your thoughts to heaven, behold the splendid hosts of angels that are there subject to him and are employed by him for the service of his people; and you cannot but be impressed with a sense of his dignity and greatness. For these and similar reasons God uses the ministry of angels.

2. This ministry is not committed to a few hundred or a few thousand of the heavenly host. Each one of the various orders of angels from the lowest rank to the highest archangel, is sent forth for this benevolent purpose. "Are they not *all* ministering spirits?"

3. Perhaps it is difficult to tell the precise period

at which they begin to exercise these offices of charity, towards those who, according to the eternal purposes of God, shall be heirs of salvation. It is probable, however, that their care commences the moment the soul is infused into the body. "Thou hast covered me," says David, "in my mother's womb." The providence of God is then thus early extended over his children; and why may we not suppose that those angels, who in after-times are the instruments of God's providence, serve the same purpose at this early period, and defend, strengthen, and cherish the chosen heir of heaven, even before it has seen the light? Why may we not suppose that other angels, besides the one who gave directions to the wife of Manoah, respecting her conduct before the birth of Sampson, (Judg. xiii. 13, 14.) may have invisibly watched over other mothers before their offspring opened their eyes upon the world? This, we say is *probable*, but it is *certain* that the holy angels watch over children in their tenderest years. "Take heed," says our blessed Lord, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven *their* angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven:" (Mat. xviii. 10.)—a text to be understood of those little in age and growth, as well as of converts who resemble children in docility, humility and harmlessness. No one can think of all the perils of children, and all the exposures of youth, without being astonished that notwithstanding his ignorance and heedlessness, he

has been carried through them all, much more safely than he could have been by the greatest human prudence. This astonishment is not removed till we remember that heaven is observant—that angels are vigilant.

The care thus early commenced ceases not during any of the periods or vicissitudes of life. In the dreariness of old age as well as in the vigour of youth; in the languors of disease as well as in the season of health; in the gloom of affliction and sorrow as well as in the sunshine of prosperity and joy; when the night seals up our faculties in sleep, or when we awake refreshed from our slumbers: at all periods and in all places, angels missioned by the Almighty surround us, and their ministry is not for a moment intermitted, until we arrive at the abodes of the blest.

4. The *objects* of this ministry are all "those who shall be heirs of salvation." The ungrateful neglecter of God cannot hope for this privilege. The holy spirits may perhaps extend a general care over the wicked, but they will not exercise this tender and kind affection upon those who outrage and insult their master. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about *them*" *only* "*that fear him*:" (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) No, unhappy man, who hast no part in the blood of Christ, who hast no love for this Saviour, who habitually disregardest his laws; to

thee no angels minister except those that have ascended from hell and that strive to lead thee thither. Thou dost not participate in this inestimable blessing of the pious; thou hast no right to the consolations of this discourse.

5. But what is the *nature* and what are the *acts* of this ministry?

These angels *guard and protect* us in dangers; unseen by mortal eyes, they often interpose in our behalf and powerfully defend us. Many an arrow that flieth in secret, is averted by their vigilance; many a calamity that was just rushing upon us is warded off by their care. When Lot and his family were in danger of perishing in Sodom, the angels directed them to a secure retreat: (Gen. xix. 15–17.) When the king of Syria resolved to destroy Elisha, angels delivered the prophet from peril; (2 Kings vi.) The three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lions' den, were preserved by the ministry of angels: (Dan. iii. 25. and vi. 22.)—and Peter and the apostles were by the same means rescued from prison: (Acts v. 19. and xii. 7.) And lest we should suppose that these interpositions were made only for extraordinary persons and in extraordinary circumstances, we are told in general terms by the Psalmist in a text which has already been quoted, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about those that fear him, and delivereth them." And in another psalm he assures the

pious man, "God shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways: They shall bear thee up in their hands lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone:" (Ps. xci. 11, 12.) In all our ways then that are good, and in every step that we tread, we have the care and ministry of tutelary angels; they are our ordinary defence and guard; and in all our justifiable undertakings we may say with as much confidence as Abraham, "The Lord before whom we walk, will send his angel with us, and prosper our ways." (Gen. xxiv. 40.)

It is true that notwithstanding this care, the righteous sometimes suffer afflictions; but these are afflictions which are sent in mercy, for the cultivation of their faith and holiness; and which the angels, who act only according to the commands and good pleasure of God, cannot prevent without violating their duty both to their Lord and to the objects of their charge. But even in such circumstances, the angels are not careless and indifferent spectators; they give support to the pious under these sorrows, and remove them when the merciful ends which God intended by them have been accomplished.

Yes, in all our afflictions and distresses, they *bestow the most precious consolations.* Thus they ministered to Jesus Christ, according to his needs in his agony in the garden; and what they did for the *head* they perform for the *members*, so far as God sees it is

expedient. Thus they comforted and encouraged the desponding Elijah: (1 Kings xix.) Thus they brought joy to the soul of Peter, confined in prison: (Acts xii. 7.) Thus they supported Paul, amidst the fury of the tempest. (Acts xxvii. 23.) And no doubt they often perform the same kind offices to christians in the present day, cheering them when dejected, and encouraging them when bowed down. For this office they are admirably qualified from the tenderness of their natures, from a more intimate acquaintance with the state of our souls than our earthly friends can have, from the more rapturous consolations which they bring, from the easier access they have to our spirits, and from the impossibility of excluding them from the solitary sufferer, to whom human sympathy is prohibited. In vain will the tyrant strengthen the walls of the dungeon in which the servant of God is laid, and surround it by his guards; all his efforts cannot shut out these messengers of heaven.

The angels *suggest holy thoughts, and incite to pious actions.* As the evil spirits continually attempt to seduce us into sin, so the blessed angels strive by their monitions and excitements to preserve and advance us in holiness. And as the criminal suggestions of the former are not often distinctly perceived, because they are rendered effectual only by being mingled with our corruptions—so on the other hand it is equally difficult distinctly to perceive these an-

gelical impressions, because they concur with that principle of grace infused by the Holy Ghost. Satan and his angels perpetually compass the earth, seeking whom they may devour; spreading snares and temptations for the pious: the angels of God stand prepared to resist all their assaults, to admonish and support the believer, who might otherwise be overcome. As they rejoiced in the first repentance of the sinner, (Luke xv. 10.) so they afterwards delight to further him in goodness.

The angels minister to believers *in the hour of death.* In this last conflict with the king of terrors, they surround the bed of the christian to comfort and assist him, to drive off the powers of darkness that would harrass and distress him. As they stood by the Redeemer in his agony, so they are with his followers in their last and greatest need. They mingle the song of triumph with the sighs and tears of our relatives and friends, and rejoice that "having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, and finished our course," we are about to receive the crown of victory. At the moment when the soul is separated from the body, they joyfully receive it, defend it from the bands of apostate spirits who would willingly seize it, and bear it exulting to the throne of God. Thus they carried the spirit of Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham; (Luke xvi. 22.) thus they wafted Elijah through the opening clouds to the regions of glory. (2 Kings ii. 11.) They present the

happy spirit to their common Lord; they strengthen in the world of love the fellowship which was begun on earth; they unitedly raise the anthem of everlasting praise to the All-Merciful and the Redeemer.

At the resurrection and final judgment they are still employed for believers. It is not their office to raise the bodies of the saints; this is the effect of Almighty power, and is peculiar to the Deity: but at the consummation of all things, they will attend and make preparations for the great events that then will be transacted; they will descend from heaven with their Lord, when "he shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him:" (Mat. xxv. 31.) They will be employed in summoning the sleeping dead to appear. "The voice of the archangel" (1 Thes. iv. 16.) will penetrate every grave, and the rest of these glorious beings will add to the solemnities of this event; for Jesus "shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Mat. xxiv. 31.) They accompany the souls of believers to their former bodies. Over these bodies it is not improbable from the conduct of Michael, (Jude 9.) that they had some charge during their separation from their spirits; and now the soul which they had conducted to heaven, they re-conduct to its former tabernacle. They "sever the wicked from among the just;" (Mat. xiii. 49.) they witness and ap-

prove the sentence which God pronounces; and ascend to immutable felicity with the redeemed; who, perfectly delivered from ignorance, sorrow and sin, have no longer need of their directions, their consolations, or their incitements to holiness. Then they fall together with adoring gratitude before the Lord, and celebrate that sublime worship which was seen in vision by the beloved disciple: "I beheld and I heard the voices of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing." (Rev. v. 11, 12.)

Such are some of the principal occupations of the blessed angels towards believers. We might enumerate several other offices of love, did the limits of our discourse permit it: but we have mentioned enough to shew the high privileges of those who shall be heirs of salvation. We might have added many probable conjectures; but we chose rather to adhere to what is plainly and unequivocally taught in the word of God.

III. This subject is full of useful instructions. It is not presented to you merely to amuse your imagination, but to correct your feelings, and regulate your conduct.

1. We are bound to love, to reverence, and to imitate these angels. While we abhor that superstition and impiety, which renders to them the worship due only to God, let us be careful to cherish for them those sentiments, which their characters and their relations to us require.

Every thing that tends to excite *love*, is to be found in them. Do we love those objects that are excellent in themselves? Surely then the holy angels deserve our affection, in a higher degree than the most perfect of mortals, since they are far more amiable and exalted, have far more of the image of God and of moral beauty, incomparably exceed in knowledge and benevolence, any of our friends on earth. Do we love those persons who are tenderly attached to us? The blessed angels have a special affection for us: as the fond parent, or the pious pastor has a peculiar love for the family or flock which God has committed to him, so these spirits feel a warm, a distinguished affection for those who are made, by the appointment of the Lord, their special charge and care. Besides, as they love God with greater intensity and ardour than we do, they for the sake of God, must more warmly love those who bear his image. Do we love those whose state, pursuits and inclinations, are similar to our own? The angel and the christian are servants of the same God, members of the same immortal society, having the same Jesus as their common head, engaged alike

in glorifying the Lord, and obeying his commandments. Every motive then capable of exciting love, should fix our attachment on them; and sweet indeed, is the communion of a believer with these spirits in the exercise of mutual affection.

Let us also *reverence* them. "Wheresoever you are," said one of the fathers, "reverence the angels." Let us remember, that in our most retired moments, in our most secret solitudes, we have these as our companions, and therefore let us not dare to do any thing which we would blush to perform in the presence of the most holy and virtuous of mankind. And especially let us exercise this reverence for them when we are engaged in the worship of God: then they are peculiarly present with us, and though they do not come as preachers of the gospel, this being committed to sinful men, that they might more deeply sympathize with those in the same situation by nature with themselves, and that their success might be ascribed only to God; yet the angels are carefully observant of our devotions. Remember then in your approaches to God, not only the greatness and holiness of the Being whom you adore, but also the dignity of the companions who join with you; the zeal, the constancy, and the joy with which they serve their Maker. This remembrance will animate you to exertion, that there may not be too great a discordance between your praises and prayers, and those of your fellow-worshippers.

If we thus love and reverence, we shall be careful also to *imitate* them: like them, we shall make it our chief delight to obey and glorify God, and shall esteem it our highest title of honour to be his servants. We shall strive according to our daily prayer, to do "the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven." With David, we shall from the consideration of their employments, rouse up our own souls to the same occupations; and having exclaimed, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength," we shall fervently add, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Like these benevolent spirits, we shall make it our delight to succour the afflicted, to console the unhappy, to confirm the wavering, to direct the doubting. When so elated with pride by those distinctions made between us and others, by nature, or providence, or imagination, as to regard those beneath us with contempt, and refuse to interest ourselves in their concerns, let us think of the angels: though far more elevated above the highest of our race, than any man can be above his fellow-worm, yet they condescend to minister unto us; to extend their sympathies and attention even to a Lazarus, whom the rich man treats with disdain. Let us cultivate this same condescension and tenderness, if we would be truly great.

2. The ministry of angels demands our gratitude to God. "The Lord forgive me," says the excellent Bishop Hall, "for that among my other offences,

I have suffered myself so much to forget, not only his divine presence, but also the presence of his holy angels. It is, I confess, my great sin that I have filled up my eyes with other objects, and been slack in returning praises to my God for the continual assistance of those blessed and beneficent spirits, who have ever graciously attended me without intermission from the first hour of my conception to the present moment; neither ever shall, I hope, absent themselves from my tutelage and protection, till they shall have presented my poor soul to her final glory." We have all of us need with him to supplicate forgiveness for this omission: when God honours us with the attendance of his own glorious retinue, commissions the brightest orders in creation to serve as guides, instructors, and comforters to us, shall no gratitude swell our hearts, shall no thanksgivings burst from our lips for this tenderness and love? shall not "men praise the Lord for his goodness, for these his wonderful works to the children of men?"

We frequently speak of the power and malice of evil spirits, and of the temptations with which they assail us: why then do we forget the assistance of the good angels, except that we more easily retain the remembrance of injuries than of mercies; or that we think to excuse ourselves by casting the blame of our sins upon satan, while we would reserve to ourselves all the glory of our good deeds? Are these dispositions becoming a believer?

3. This subject should solace the believer in all his dangers and distresses. However numerous or powerful may be your foes, you may always confidently use the language of Elisha when he was encompassed with hostile troops, and without any visible means of deliverance, "They that be with us are more than they which be with them." (2 Kings vi. 16.) In the midst of your perils, if your eyes were opened like those of his servant, you would behold the angelic band surrounding you, and all your apprehensions would be dissipated. By that faith which "is the evidence of things not seen," contemplate at all times these holy beings, vigilant, benevolent, powerful, and faithful in the discharge of the office committed to them: to the reproaches of the ungodly, oppose the approbation of these witnesses of your conduct; when your heart is pained by the blasphemies of the impenitent, think of their hallelujahs to the God whom you love; under infirmities of body, anticipate the time when "this tabernacle shall be dissolved," and you shall resemble them; when bereaved of friends, recollect that these your oldest, your most tried created friends, still are with you; when persecuted or oppressed, recal their conduct to those who in former times were in the same situation; when about to enter into eternity, rejoice at the purity, the tenderness, the zeal of the companions with whom you shall forever dwell.

4. Despiser of the grace of Jesus, in what manner do these angels regard you? They were innocent; for them it was not necessary that Jesus should die, that the blood of the covenant should flow; yet they treated not his atonement with indifference; they announced his birth with rapture to Zechariah, to the Virgin, to Joseph, to the shepherds; they descended from heaven to felicitate the earth upon it; they attended the Redeemer in the wilderness, and the garden; they rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, that mortals might learn with joy that the Saviour had risen from the dead; they were with him when he rose refulgent from the holy mountain; they still make his praise their theme and their delight; and notwithstanding the extent of their powers, they see such glories and such wonders of love in the mysteries of redemption, that they constantly search more deeply into them. (1 Pet. i. 12.) If such have been their sentiments and conduct, notwithstanding they were secure without the sacrifice of Immanuel, with what mingled indignation and pity must they look at you? What must they think of the baseness, the ingratitude, the madness of your conduct? Could tears be shed by them, they would surely weep, when they beheld guilty, unhappy mortals, exposed to a misery that has no other bounds than eternity, yet despising the grace that would save them, neglecting that Redeemer who died for them, breaking through the restraints that divine mercy has placed between them

and the world of torments, and wading through the blood of Jesus flowing between them and hell, that they may seize upon damnation. Oh! be not so ungrateful to your Lord, such cruel enemies to your own felicity. At last renounce your sins, and accept the offers of salvation: then the angels, who are now in the midst of us, shall rejoice over you, and shall shout, "Our brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

5. Finally, how much happier is the meanest, and most despised christian, than the most prosperous sinner. Ye worldlings, who are surrounded with riches, with dignities and acquirements, come, and for a moment compare your situation with that of the humble followers of Jesus. Enlightened by the revelation of God I look at invisible things: you both are surrounded by bands of powerful spirits; but the host that attends you has risen from hell; they flatter and delude you that they may lead you into the abyss; they tell you that religion is useless or false; that there is no necessity of a strict regard to the duties of piety; that the threatenings of the gospel need not terrify you; that you may be saved without a change of heart, the application of the blood of Jesus, and the influences of the Holy Spirit: thus they whisper to you; you believe them, and charge God with falsehood, who has taught you otherwise; you follow their suggestions, and prepare to share their fate: shortly death will come:

stripping you of this body, it will remove from your eyes that veil which hides from you your present companions: they will seize upon your shuddering soul, and while they, the fierce executioners of God's wrath, exercise upon it their malignant fury, they will laugh you to scorn, because you were so foolish as to believe them, when God and his Spirit, and his people, and his ministers, warned you of your danger.

This is your situation, unhappy man: contrast it now with that of the humble christian whom you despise. The most glorious and holy part of creation daily and nightly encamp around him; feel for him the most ardent affection; guide him during all his pilgrimage; and when death comes, own him as a brother, and carry him in triumph to their Lord. Sinner, I appeal to your own conscience, which of these two states is preferable? Ah! you cannot avoid wishing for the lot of the righteous; hasten then, and seek the favour of the Lord of angels, and of Jesus Christ their prince. Thus, and thus only, will they become your friends.

SERMON X.

LIFE OF ADAM.

GENESIS v. 5.

"*And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.*"

IN the holy scriptures, God has used a variety of methods to teach us our duty, and to touch our hearts. Sometimes we read those plain and unequivocal precepts which declare his will, and at other times we are instructed by an interesting parable. Now we are allured by the voice of mercy, which sounds from Zion; and then we are alarmed by the thunders which roll over Sinai. Heaven is here unveiled to us, and we almost hear the harps of angels, and the hallelujahs of the glorified saints; hell is there uncovered, and the shrieks of the despairing vibrate on our ears, and the smoke of their torments rises before our eyes. Here prophets look down the long current of years, and predict things which are to come; there, inspired historians shew us the accomplishment of these predictions. Here the merits of the Redeemer, and promises sealed with blood, are reached forth to us by our heavenly Father; there the deep pollution of our hearts, and the de-

merits of sin are developed to us. Every method is employed to bring back rebellious and revolted man to God, and to happiness. The understanding, the heart, and the conscience, are by turns addressed in language the most forcible, and by motives weighty as eternity. But the inspiring Spirit, well knowing the frame of man, well knowing how strongly we are stimulated by example, has especially chosen to communicate instruction to us from the lives of others. The greater part of the sacred volume, is historical; and the histories which it relates, are not intended merely to excite a barren admiration, or to gratify an idle curiosity; but are designed and calculated to cherish the love and the fear of God, to teach us what he is, and what we are, and to give new warmth to all our devotional feelings. Properly speaking, they are not so much the history of particular men or nations as the history of God, of his nature, his perfections, his providence and will, as exemplified in these particular instances; and they therefore when properly considered are eminently calculated to lead the heart and the affections to him. When the blighted beauties of Eden are presented to our eyes, it is not that our regrets may be excited from contrasting it with its former beauty, but that we may be made to shudder at the guilt of sin, and tremble at the danger of disobeying the Most High. When we behold Noah riding on the back of the swelling surges, secure amidst the desolation of a world, it is our duty not merely

to rejoice at his personal deliverance; but to mark also the faithfulness of God, and the blessedness that results from believing his declarations and obeying his precepts. When we see the arm of Abraham extended and ready to be dyed with the gushing blood of his son, we should not merely have our natural sympathies excited, but learn from him to sacrifice the dearest objects of our affections, those on which our souls rest with fondest delight, at the command of God. When the smoking ruins of Jerusalem are spread before us, when we behold the countless number of her children that became the victims of the sword, of famine, and of sedition; when we listen to the shrieks of the bereaved, and mark the convulsive struggles of the dying; it is not merely to fill our eyes with tears, and our hearts with sorrow for this unhappy nation, that this picture is presented to us; but to shew us the terrors of Jehovah, the woes which must crush the guilty, when the patience of the Lord is exhausted, and the arm of the living God armed with thunders is raised against them, and the accumulated misery which must at last overtake those who despise the means of grace, and the offers of salvation.

It cannot then but be highly profitable for us to review some of the histories contained in the sacred volume, and enquire what are those lessons of wisdom and piety which we are taught by them. It must especially be interesting to consider the history of our great progenitor, since his life is so intimate-

ly connected with the state of the world around us, with our constitutions and frames, and with that plan of redemption on which all our hopes are founded; since his life is full of events in comparison with which the achievements of the most illustrious heroes become contemptible, and the rise and fall of the greatest empires that ever existed upon earth dwindle into insignificance. Listen then, my brethren, while following the word of God, we present to you the life of the first-created man.

The world had already been formed by the great Creator; it displayed his perfections, and was replenished with every thing necessary for the benefit or felicity of man. But there was yet no rational being that inhabited it to contemplate these works, and trace in them with adoring wonder, the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of Him who made them. The sun, the moon, and the stars, declared in their courses the glory of God; but they did not perceive this glory. The earth with its productions showed that its Maker was divine; but unendued with intelligence, it could not recognize the divinity. Man then was formed, to behold this glory, to see these traces of the Godhead; and on earth to respond to the heavenly host, among whom "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy," at the view of the new creation. In order to manifest his superior dignity, at his creation, there was as it were, a solemn consultation of the

sacred Trinity; for the holy volume plainly intimates a concurrence in counsel of the three persons for the formation as well as redemption of man. When other things were to be produced, God spake, and they appeared. He said, Let them be, and they were. But at the creation of man, he said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." His body was formed of the dust of the earth, and lay like it, inanimate, till a nobler and immortal principle was infused in him immediately by God: "The Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Being formed in the image of God, he was called Adam, from a Hebrew word signifying likeness.*

Springing immediately from the hands of his Creator, he was doubtless endued with a perfection of body and soul, of which we can form but a feeble conception. In the plenitude of his powers he came into being. When the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, appeared to repair the ruins of the fall, he in compassion to us, and to encourage all of every age to apply to him with confidence, became the babe of Bethlehem, and the youth that dwelt at Nazareth; but our progenitor appeared at once in his maturity, and knew nothing of the feebleness of infancy and childhood, of the dangers and inexperience of youth. "He was made a little lower than the angels." His body was probably surrounded by a

* See Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon.

splendour like that of Moses, when he descended from the mount, like that of Jesus when he was transfigured upon Tabor. The divine image which he bore, and in which, alas! the most eminent believers in this life are but very partially renewed, consisted, as we judge from some expressions of St. Paul, (Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.) in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. His mind not yet darkened by sin, was free from error and prejudice, and inspired with all natural, and especially moral knowledge, necessary for his state: his soul had no vicious propensity; his will was conformed to the will of God; his heart, filled with love to God, flamed with the fervours of devotion and gratitude by night and by day. Full dominion was given him over all the creatures; and he enjoyed an intimate communion with his Almighty Friend, and fellowship with the holy angels. It is this communion and intercourse with God, which forms the felicity of heaven: must it not have given inexpressible delight to Adam upon earth? He was placed in the most beautiful part of a world, all of which was beautiful. This spot is called the garden of Eden, or of delight; its exact situation, cannot with precision be ascertained; neither is it necessary that it should: "I do not," says good bishop Hall, "seek where that Paradise was which we lost; I know where that Paradise is, which we must study to seek, and hope to find. As man was the image of God, so was that earthly Paradise an image of heaven; both the ima-

ges are lost; both the first patterns are eternal." In this favoured spot were collected all that was useful or pleasant; every variety of the animal or vegetable creation; all that could gratify the senses, the imagination, or the heart; and among the rest, two symbolical and sacramental trees; the one, the tree of life, the seal of that life and felicity, which would have resulted from obedience, and "by divine institution a visible, familiar, and permanent lesson, by which man was not only admonished of the eternal distinction between good and evil, but put upon his guard as to the quarter from which alone evil could assail him.*" The other the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the seal of that death, which was threatened upon disobedience.

Here God was pleased to enter into a covenant with man Though as our Creator, we are bound to obey him, yet he will not claim this obedience solely from his absolute sovereignty; but condescends to form a covenant of friendship, in which he vouchsafes to engage to recompense this obedience. He permits man to eat of all except one tree, which he is prohibited to taste, under the most awful threatening: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Thus he was placed between life and death; the symbols of both

* Vitringa, Obs. Sac.

grew nigh each other, and were constantly exhibited to him, and he left to choose between them, after he had received proper instruction from God.

But there was still a void in the heart of Adam; he still needed some one of the same nature and powers with himself: formed for social intercourse, he needed some heart that would unite with his in celebrating the author of all good; some being, not like the angels elevated above him, but of the same rank with himself with whom he might form the tenderest ties. He had looked through the inferior creation and found no helpmeet for him, and he sighed for one with whom to share the happiness which he enjoyed. How long he remained solitary we are not informed; long enough however to be taught a language by God and to receive much information from him, and to survey every animal of the land and the air, and bestow upon them significant names. Feeling his want, disposed to seek this blessing from God, and to receive it with gratitude, it was not long withheld from him. In order that his partner might be more endeared to him, God was pleased to make her not only *like him*, but also *of his very substance*, and then conduct her as his gift to man. Who can conceive the happiness of this blessed pair? Surrounded by every thing that they could desire, rich in the most cordial love to each other, and united in the warmest love to their God; ignorant of those vices and passions which

embitter life, and of that misery which is the fruit and the effect of sin; enjoying the visits of God and his angels, what more did they need. How sweet was the interchange of affection between them; how perfect the communion of thoughts, of sentiments, and good wishes! What new gratitude swelled the bosom of Adam, and with what transport, as one expresses it, "did he change the solitary, My Father and my God, into the social Our Father and our God." It is a state on which the imagination rests with delight: the mind, pained with the sins, the follies, and the woes which now infest the world, loves to wander back to the holy groves of Paradise, and to linger by the peaceful streams of Eden.

How long this happy state continued we know not; The scriptures, our only source of information, do not inform us ;* but after some time they fell: fell into that abyss of woe in which we yet lie. This sun which had risen with so much splendour and darted forth such cheering and animating beams, was soon obscured by rising clouds.

From the brevity of the scripture account of this

* Some persons from the consideration that almost every great trial mentioned in the scriptures was limited to forty days, as appears from the history of Moses, of Elijah, of Nineveh, and especially of the Redeemer of whom Adam was the type, and who came to vanquish the seducer of the first man, have concluded that the trial of our first parents lasted for this time.

event, it is not surprising that we meet with some difficulties in it. Yet what if there were more; should we therefore be authorised to reject this relation? Little have we observed either nature or providence, if we have not learned that though "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of God's throne," yet, "clouds and darkness are often round about him." It is perfectly inconsistent with the humility becoming worms of the dust, to sit in judgment on the conduct of God, and to treat as improper, what our feeble reason cannot perfectly comprehend. In things that are mysterious, let us always bend and adore, "knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right."

The following is the substance of what we know concerning this interesting event. God, no doubt in infinite wisdom, appears to have thought proper to subject all his intelligent creatures to some trial before they were confirmed, to place them in a state of probation before they were established. This was the case with the angels, some of whom fell; this was also the case with men. To produce and to preserve upon their minds a sense of their dependence upon God, and of his authority over them, some test of their obedience must be given. This test, from the situation in which the world then was, could not be any of those great moral precepts, which would answer this purpose with regard to us. What moral precept could have been given to Adam for his

trial, and as the condition of the covenant formed with him? He could not be enjoined to honour his parents—he had none: nor to abstain from murder, since, even if he had known what death was, and how to inflict it, this crime could be committed only upon the object of his dearest affections, without whom the world would be a solitude to him: the only two of the human race could not violate the marriage bed: Adam could not steal nor covet, because all things belonged to him: nor bear false witness, since there was no motive that could incite him to do it against the wife of his bosom: nor forgive his enemies—none existed. It is the same with regard to the first table of the law: false Gods were yet unknown; and images, invented to bring to mind the absent and invisible, could not be made by those who daily saw the glory, and heard the voice of God in the garden: perjury was the result of a more corrupted state of society; and the visible splendour of the Shekinah was too great to permit them to trifle with, or profane the name of its adorable resident: the rest of the sabbath could not be violated by those, who had no occasion for labour; who on that day enjoyed the special visitations and presence of God, and who just come from the forming hands of their Maker, could not possibly forget the wonders of creation. What moral precept then can you select, proper to be used as a test of the obedience of our first parents? These moral precepts they could not violate, and therefore their keep

ing them would be no test of virtue. Besides, the holiness of man rendered moral precepts improper for this purpose. To man, depraved and sinful, whose natural inclinations are estranged from God and holiness, they may serve as tests, since his compliance with them, in opposition to the seductions of corruption, may prove his regard to the authority of God. But in innocent man all whose inclinations and desires led to their performance, who had no bias contrary to them, whose nature and constitution induced him to comply with them; in such a being obedience to them would not be a proof of his regard to the commands of God, since such an obedience would be the necessary result of his nature and the habits of his soul. It was then necessary that the test should be some *positive* precept; and the more simple and easy this precept, the more would it display the goodness of God, and render man inexcusable for its violation. What then could be more suitable and proper for our first parents, living in a garden, than the command to abstain from a particular tree? Where now are all the impious witticisms of libertines on this subject?

The same God who, in consistence with his attributes permits us still to meet with seductions and to be exposed to tempters, permitted it then. The apostate spirit assumed the body of the serpent, which in the state of innocence was as familiar with man as any other animal, and inspiring it with new wis-

dom addressed himself to that party, which being more tender and pliable, might more easily be led astray, and being more amiable and persuasive, would when depraved more probably seduce the other. We are not acquainted with the whole process of the temptation; we know enough to perceive that it was subtle. Satan first enquires as though for information whether this tree be prohibited: he suggests that she may have erred in her opinion; he insinuates that it was the envy of their Creator which debarred them from this valuable fruit; he speaks of it as pleasant to the taste, as desirable to make one wise, and at last he boldly declares that the threatening will not be executed, but they exalted to a higher rank of being, by a violation of the command: "Ye shall not die, but shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." She was made with power to stand, but free to fall: She listened to the tempter, and in an evil hour she plucked and ate. Adam, overcome by Eve's persuasions and seductions, yet "not deceived," says the apostle, (I Tim. ii. 14.) presumptuously partook of her guilt and her punishment.

Here again the infidel sneers, and speaks of this as a trifling crime. Let him consider, and he will find that it was a sin great as can be conceived. In violating this precept our first parents defied the power of the Almighty, accused the God of truth of falsehood, attempted to deceive the omniscient;

with a baseness and ingratitude, which causes us to shudder, they suspected of malice and envy, Him who is love itself, and who had crowned them with blessings, so numberless and immense. In the covenant formed with them, an abstinence from this tree was made the test of their allegiance to their Creator; by eating of it therefore, they rejected him as their sovereign, and renounced their fealty to him. Looking for knowledge and felicity elsewhere than from God, desirous to be more independent of him, believing Satan in opposition to him, they withdrew themselves from him, and united themselves to the apostate spirits. This crime was also inconceivably aggravated by the advantages which they possessed, for knowing and performing the will of God, and by their freedom from those vicious inclinations and unholy passions, which are found in fallen man.

The pleasures of sin endure but for a moment. Soon were those hopes of felicity from eating the forbidden fruit, which they had foolishly entertained, blasted forever. In the cool of the day, perhaps at the period when they had been accustomed to unite in pouring out their souls before God, they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden;" and probably some visible tokens of the divine presence were manifested. It was a voice which was familiar and had once been dear to them; they were tokens which they had once welcomed with exulting joy:

but now that they know their nakedness, that they see themselves despoiled of their innocence, that the blessings of the covenant are forfeited, and its curse incurred, they flee with confusion and terror, and foolishly attempt to conceal themselves from him who is omnipresent. But they are brought as criminals to the bar of their God: and what is here their conduct? Do they melt into tears? Do they bewail their transgressions? Do they confess their crime with humility, and pour out their prayers for pardon? No; instead of this we behold only the most trifling evasions and subterfuges. But these are useless; they cannot deceive the Judge of all, who reads the thoughts of the heart; their mouth, as will at the decisive day be the case with those sinners who now like them plead excuses for their guilt, was stopped, and they were compelled to stand guilty before God. Their body by their transgression has lost its primitive glory, and has become subject to pains, to disease, and death. Instead of the sacred peace and holiness and tranquillity which dwelt in their souls, they now have become polluted, estranged from God; his image is departed and his communion is lost; the passions once harmonious now render their souls a tumultuous field of battle; conscience becomes their foe and points to the eternal misery which they have deserved; they see nothing which can save them from endless perdition. They stand trembling and in

despair waiting for their sentence. What joy, what gratitude must they have felt when they heard a promise of mercy mingled with the denunciations of God; when they were pointed to the seed of the woman, to that blessed Messiah who should gain a victory over their seducer; and when to strengthen their faith in him, sacrifices to prefigure him were instituted. They were expelled from Eden; the ground was cursed for their sake; sorrow and affliction became their portion till they returned to the dust from which they were taken, and cherubim and a flaming sword henceforth guarded the access to the tree of life.

The effects of this fall of our first parents were not confined to them, but are felt by us. Against this it is vain to object, for it is proved not merely by the assertions of scripture, but by fact and experience. Are we not by nature subject to misery and death? Are we not by nature polluted and defiled, with irregular passions and unholy desires? Are we not of consequence exposed to the just vengeance of God? This we cannot disguise from ourselves—Blessed be God we have him whom the tree of life prefigured to whom we may have access; around whose throne there are no cherubim or flaming sword to prevent us from receiving those merits whereby we may live forever.

How different was the remainder of Adam's life from its commencement. He henceforth saw misery around him in its various forms, and beheld in the world, in himself, and in his descendants, the awful consequences of his transgression. He had viewed the earth in its glory ; he sees it in ruins. He had beheld man in the image of God—he beholds him now lying in the dust.

He became a father. Eve immediately exclaimed in the fullness of her joy, "I have gotten a man from the Lord ;" or as perhaps the words should rather be translated, "I have gotten the man, even Jehovah ;" the promised seed, the predicted Messiah. How many delightful anticipations did she form. What felicity did she expect to derive from this her child. But like all other expectations of permanent happiness from earthly objects, they were blasted. Who can conceive her anguish when this son became the murderer of his brother ; when she saw first exemplified in Abel that death which she had brought into the world. Of their numerous posterity but one more is mentioned, Seth ; in whose family true religion was preserved, and in whose line Christ was born.

Adam lived till he saw the world overspread with wickedness, and then according to the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return."

sunk into the tomb. Whether Eve survived him is unknown. It is supposed that they both, through faith in the promised Messiah, obtained the pardon of their sins, and entered at their deaths into a more glorious Paradise than that which they had lost.

This history teaches us,

1. The fatal effects of sin, and presents us with the strongest motives to hate and flee from it. It is sin which has inundated our world with a deluge of evils; which has converted the garden of God into an Aceldama, a field of blood. It is sin which has degraded our race from the elevated station which it once held; which has effaced the splendid image of God, and exposed us to his eternal indignation. It is sin which has dug the abyss of despair and kindled the flames of the world of torments. Look around you in the world; behold the infinitely varied afflictions of body and of mind "that man is heir to;" collect in one mighty mass all the groans that have been uttered, all the tears that have been shed, all the anguish that has been felt from the fall of Adam to the present time: unveil the depths of the human heart, and consider what loathsome spectacles it has presented to a holy God; stand by the beds of the departing, and mark the terrors of their souls and the agonies of their bodies; enter the repositories of the dead, and behold the worm and putrefaction preying on the mouldering carcase; descend in ima-

gination to the abode of the accursed, and behold there "the fire that never will be quenched," and the thunders of divine indignation which burst upon these devoted men: and then say to yourself—All this, inconceivably more than this, is the effect of sin. And will you still love this murderer, this murderer of two lives at once? Will you still cherish it and give it a residence in your heart?

2. This history directs us to the only Redeemer from sin, and points us to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the promised seed of the woman, as the only refuge of the guilty.—Mercy and forgiveness were proclaimed to our fallen parents, not in consequence of their sorrow and tears; not in consequence of their resolutions to live in future devoted to God—Alas! these could not satisfy the broken law; these could not atone to the violated holiness of God. Resting on these alone our progenitors must have been undone forever. But pardon was proclaimed through the eternal Son, who then was promised, and the effusion of whose blood was thus early typified by that of the sacrificed victim which prefigured him. Neither Adam, nor a single one of his descendants, ever obtained salvation, except through him. Like the sun which enlightens both the stars above it and the earth beneath it, his merits extend backward to the fall of man, and forward to the consummation of all things.—Behold then, fallen man, thine only hope; the

promise made in Paradise has been fulfilled—the seed of the woman has come—" His heel has been bruised:" He suffered, he agonised, he bled for man, for thee: in him place all thy confidence: away with the fig-leaves of thine own righteousness: seek to be covered by his atonement. Flee from that covenant which can no longer profit you: Put your soul under the bonds of that better covenant which offers you a Paradise, into which satan never can enter; from which all the strength of the Godhead, all the stability of the covenant, all the faithfulness of the promises, all the merits of Christ, are engaged to prevent you from falling.

3. This history teaches us to avoid the first seductions to sin. Had Eve boldly and resolutely repulsed the tempter when he first approached, he would have fled from her: when she consented to listen to his reasonings and persuasions, she was already half undone. My brethren, he still tempts us in the same manner as he did Eve; he still endeavours to excite hard thoughts of God and his commandments; to lull us to rest with hopes of impunity, notwithstanding the most solemn declarations of the Lord; to lead us to trust in ourselves; to seduce us to unbelief; to give us exaggerated ideas of the value of sensual pleasure; to make us discontented with the state in which God has placed us. In such circumstances what does prudence, what does our interest, what does reli-

gion demand of us? Shall we dally with the temptation? Shall we tamper with the adversary of our souls? Shall we gaze upon the forbidden fruits to which he directs our attention, thinking that at any time we can withdraw our eyes? Ah! my brethren, if we act thus he will insensibly lead us to pluck and eat: If we do not oppose the beginnings of evil, we are undone. For the proof of this I appeal to the most hardened and profligate sinner among you. Time has been that you would have shuddered if you had thought it possible that you should ever advance so far in the paths of sin as you have done. Time has been when you would have replied to one predicting that your character would be what it now is, in the indignant language of Hazael—"Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?" Yet you have thus far advanced in sin; you have become that character which you could not consider without horror. And how have you been led to this eminence in guilt? By rapid and gigantic strides? No: Insensibly and by degrees. Satan spread his bait before you; you gazed upon it at first with apprehension; you shortly became enamoured with its imposing but deceptive charms; you began to wish that it were lawful; your desires duped your judgment, and you concluded that you might indulge in it once: After this indulgence, your conscience was at first alarmed, and you resolved to offend no more. But the temptation was again presented, and you

had not learned wisdom from the past. You passed round the same circle; you were again lured to the edge of the precipice and thrust down it. A habit of sinning was formed; sonscience became stupified; the fetters of satan were every day entwining you more and more securely, till at last you had not even the faintest desire to be liberated from his disgraceful vassalage. Oh! my brethren, if we could peruse the records of hell, how many thousands would we find who might serve as the originals of this picture! Let me then again conjure you, as you value your own souls, to trifle not with temptation: say not that you will advance a certain distance into the territories of satan and then return: the experience of millions proves the folly and the peril of such an attempt. "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: be therefore sober, be vigilant," resist him immediately, "lest he beguile you through his subtlety." And remember too, that he is not your only tempter. If Eve fell through his seductions, Adam was ensnared by her blandishments: such trials (and they are severe ones) you may meet with. Those who are connected to you by blood or affection, may endeavor to seduce you from the ways of God: listen not to them: let the authority of God be paramount in your soul. Be ready to lay down every thing as a sacrifice, and reject it as a snare when it comes in competition with your duty to him.

4. This history teaches us the dangerous error of these men who suppose that they are acceptable to God, merely because they discharge the moral and social duties. None of these were violated by Adam, yet he fell under the sentence of condemnation. Your religion (if I may call it a religion) might appear reasonable, if there were no God to whom you sustained important relations, and if there were no future world for which you were bound to prepare. But since there is a God and a futurity, it is the extreme of folly to rest on those hopes on which you lean. "You shall have your reward" in the esteem, the approbation and love of your fellow-men whom you benefit: but expect not the approbation of that God "who is not in all your thoughts." The young ruler in the gospel was as moral as you, yet he was not esteemed by the Saviour one of his disciples.

5. Finally, my brethren, let us all be led by this history to examine ourselves. Let us listen to the voice of God crying to us, "Where art thou?" We were all born in the image of corrupted and fallen Adam, exposed to the curses of that covenant which he violated: have we been also "created in Christ Jesus to good works?" Have the lineaments of "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven," been impressed upon our soul? Have we from the depth of our misery looked with faith and love to him who "came to destroy the works of the devil?"

If we have not, in vain do we hope to enter into the Paradise of God. Satan may whisper to us, as he did to our first parents, " Ye shall not die;" but neither his assurances, nor our confident expectations of felicity, shall be able to avert from us the stroke of death, everlasting death.

SERMON XI.

CAIN AND ABEL.

GENESIS iv. 1—17.

IN the last discourse we contemplated the earth in its original glory, and afterwards despoiled of its beauty by sin: We beheld man formed in the image of God, and saw him afterwards deprived of this image and sunk in that abyss of guilt and wretchedness, from which he could be raised only by the grace of God. This grace was extended to him. Instead of that violated covenant which now spake nothing but indignation and wrath against our great progenitors, they were admitted into a new and better covenant, which was confirmed by significant rites, and which included the promise of salvation through a Redeemer. In the present discourse we shall see in the history of the two first-born among men, an image of what we still behold upon earth, where some "through an evil heart of unbelief depart from the living God," and refuse to accept the offers of mercy made through the blood of Jesus; whilst others flee to his grace as their only refuge and sanctuary. We shall see the commencement of that combat which still continues between "the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent,"

the pious and the ungodly ; the former fighting under the standard of the Redeemer and with the armour of righteousness ; the latter endeavouring by every method, however unjustifiable, by secret arts and open violence, to injure the cause and the people of God.

To our first parents expelled from Eden, some consolation was communicated on the birth of their eldest son. Parental hopes and joys were then for the first time exercised upon the earth ; and they were exercised with the greater force, because experience had not then shewn how often these hopes are blasted, and these joys withered forever. "I have gotten," exclaims the exulting mother, "a man from the Lord." She formed, no doubt, a thousand tender anticipations : She looked forward to the time when he would be adorned with every virtue ; when he would be beloved by God, and by those who should afterwards be born in the earth ; when his affection and cares would cheer her declining years ; when he would watch by her in her closing hours, smooth for her the pillow of sickness and of pain, and receive her last sigh. Her hopes were still more elevated if we translate her exclamation, as it may and perhaps should be translated, "I have gotten the man, even Jehovah," the promised seed, the predicted deliverer. She imagined perhaps that this, her child, would restore her to a felicity greater than that which she had forfeited by her sin ; that

he would introduce her to a more blissful Eden than that in which she had first opened her eyes upon the works of God; that he would banish every grief from her heart, and wipe every tear from her eye, and re-impress upon her the image of the Highest. To express her joys and expectations she called him *Cain*, a word signifying a *possession* or *acquisition* that is highly valued. (Deut. xxxii. 6. Prov. viii. 22.)

Alas! how dearly was she afterwards taught the vanity of earthly expectations! With what unutterable anguish did this son whom she prest to her bosom with so much extacy, wring her heart! How did he teach her the danger of making to ourselves an earthly idol, and suffering any thing below the skies to entwine too closely around our hearts! How did his conduct warn her to wait for the season appointed by God for the fulfilment of his promises; and to avoid hasty expectations, lest instead of a blessing, we embrace a curse.

She again became a mother. But on this second son she appears to have fixed less sanguine expectations, and he seems to have engaged a smaller share of her affections; she therefore called his name *Abel*, or *vanity*. Ah! my brethren, who of us has not found that those things which we most highly esteem, become often the sources of our deepest anguish; that our bitterest woes often

spring from the bosom of what we regard as our dearest "*acquisition*:" and on the contrary, that those things and persons on which we write "*vanity*," which hold but a small rank in our estimation, are highly favoured by God, and deserve the greatest affection from us.

The occupations of these brethren were different; the elder was a husbandman, the younger a shepherd. They were not on this account differently esteemed by God: he "is no respecter of persons." In every profession, except those which are in themselves unlawful, he has his faithful worshippers, the objects of his special love. Cain and Abel differed in a more important point; Cain was envious, malignant, unbelieving, self-righteous, a haughty despiser of salvation by faith in the promised seed, and not by his own works. Abel was an humble believing worshipper in the way which God had appointed; and we are told by the Redeemer himself, that he was "*righteous*." Perhaps the furious passions and envious dispositions of Cain were cherished by the criminal partiality of his parents, considering him as a *possession* and his brother as *vanity*; and by being led to suppose that the special favour of God was due to him as his birth-right. Parents, as you value your own felicity and that of your offspring, avoid all such invidious distinctions between your children: let this affecting history which we are considering, let the anguish which flowed from

this source in the family of Jacob, serve as beacons warning you to avoid this dangerous errour. Christians, observe in these two brethren the sovereignty of divine grace—"One is taken and the other left." Isaac, in like manner, had but two sons, and one of them is a reprobate. There are but few families like that which dwelt in Bethany, all of whom love and are beloved by the Redeemer: there are many where the ties of blood are the only uniting principle; where there is no affection formed for eternity. Are there any who hear me whose families through the grace of God are different; who can all kneel together before a common Father; who have all been washed by the blood of a common Saviour; and who anticipate a common heaven. Happy indeed are ye! Ye only know all the energy of friendship and affection, since in you they are strengthened by the common Spirit residing in you, and augmented by the fervours of united devotion. Are there any persons who like Abel, in viewing their nearest connections, see them the enemies of God and goodness, and who weep when they consider the impassible gulph that must shortly separate them from those to whom they are united on earth? Your trial is severe, but it is not peculiar to you. The wounds of your soul are deeper because the arrows that pierce it are dipped in poison by the hand of those you love: but the pain of these wounds can be assuaged by the balm of Gilead; these tortured souls can be healed by the heavenly Physician. You tread in a path in

which you may trace the footsteps of thousands who are in glory. The God who guided them can conduct you to that world where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, where you shall be surrounded by none but the holy.

The difference of character in these two brethren was displayed in the first acts of worship which are mentioned in the scriptures. "In process of time," or, "at the end of days," probably on the sabbath day, they both came to present their offerings to the Lord. Behold in them a spectacle which is still constantly exhibited to us: still the unholy and the pious appear together before God, engage in the same religious exercises, and perform the same acts of outward devotion. We all, my brethren, externally unite in offering up our supplications to the Lord, in singing his praises, and in listening to his word; but does not God who tries our hearts, see among us more than one Cain whose sacrifice is not offered with holy dispositions? Are there none of us who "have drawn near to God with our lips while our hearts have been far from him;" whose worship has been that of the body, and not of the soul? Let such formal worshippers see in Cain what is their character, and in what estimation the Lord holds that worship which is merely external.

Not only the dispositions of soul, but the offerings also of the two brethren were different. "Cain

brought of the fruits of the ground a *mincha* to Jehovah, and Abel brought a *mincha;* he also brought of the firstlings of the flock and of the fattest of them. And Jehovah had respect to Abel and his *mincha;* but to Cain and his *mincha* he had no respect." In this manner the verses containing an account of this transaction should be translated,* and they then afford us the reason of the acceptance of the one and the rejection of the other. Cain presented the *mincha*† or thank-offering of things inanimate, by which he acknowledged God to be his creator and preserver: this same offering was also presented by Abel. Nothing else would have been requisite had man continued in the state of innocence; to enjoy and to be grateful would have been all his duty: but he was now a polluted sinner over whom the curses of a broken law impended, who was exposed to eternal death, and for whom there was no hope except in the grace of God through the promised Redeemer. Sensible of this, believing in Messiah who was to come, and complying with the institutions of God, Abel offered up a bloody sacrifice, the firstlings of his flock, for a sin-offering; thereby acknowledging his guilt, his need of an atonement, and his faith in that Lamb of God slain

* See Kennicott's Two Dissertations.

† It consisted of fine flour, mingled with oil and frankincense. Lev. ii.

in the counsels of the Father before the foundation of the world. Cain, feeling no sense of sin, nor of his need of a Saviour, scarcely believing in the promised Messiah, and despising the blessings of that new covenant which was ratified with his blood, withheld the victim intended to prefigure him. It is through the Redeemer alone that the services of sinners can be accepted by a Holy God. No wonder then that while he "testified of the gifts* of Abel, he rejected the sacrifice of the unhumbled and unbelieving Cain, who still clung to the covenant of works, and "going about to establish his own righteousness, would not submit to the righteousness of God, nor look to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 3, 4.)

We are not informed in what manner the approbation of God was expressed; but from other parts of the scripture we may conclude that it was by consuming the sacrifice of Abel with fire from heaven; as in the case of Aaron when after his consecration to the high-priesthood he first offered for himself and the people; (Lev. ii. 24.) In that of Gideon when God shewed that he had chosen him as the deliverer of Israel from the Midianites; (Judg. vi. 21.) In that of David when the pestilence ceased;

* Δωρον, both the mincha and sin-offering.

(1 Chron. xxi. 26.) In that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple; (2 Chr. vii. 1.) and in that of Elijah when Jehovah displayed his superiority over Baal; (1 Kings xviii. 38.)

Let all the self-righteous look at Cain, and behold their character and their doom. The unregenerate, through ignorance, through enmity, and through pride, like him cling to the first covenant; are unwilling to submit to the self-abasing terms of the gospel, and in the character of helpless and polluted sinners to receive salvation as the free gift of God through Christ. So prone is fallen man to rely on that covenant which cannot profit him, that God expelled him from the garden lest he should still seek righteousness and life by that tree appointed as the seal of this covenant, and the sacrament of that life which it promised. But notwithstanding this, notwithstanding cherubim and a flaming sword were placed around it to cut off all our hopes, we still by nature seek righteousness by the works of the law; and when driven from this hold, we as foolishly endeavour to unite the two covenants together. My brethren, unless this temper of Cain, this pharisaical spirit be destroyed; unless we be brought to depend simply and entirely upon the Redeemer, we in vain hope for salvation.

What were the sentiments excited in the bosom of Cain, by the rejection of his sacrifice, and the acceptance of that of Abel? Was he not humbled in the dust at his unworthiness and guilt? Did he not diligently enquire into the cause of the rejection of his offering, that he might in future avoid it?—Though *his* offering was not accepted, yet did he not rejoice at the proof given by the acceptance of his brother's, that God would receive the services of sinners when presented with proper dispositions? Was not his love and esteem for his brother encreased by seeing the superior piety of Abel, and the favour which God bestowed upon him? No: "his eye was evil, because God was good." The graces and the privileges of Abel filled him with envy and discontent; and resentment against his brother and his God agitated his heart and imprinted their traces on his countenance. "He was very wroth and his countenance fell." How opposite is his conduct to that of a believer. There are times when the christian has no tokens of acceptance, and no sensible comfort or joy in the discharge of duty; does he therefore with Cain quarrel with his Maker, and harbour resentment against those who are rejoicing in the assurance of their acceptance, and in the light of God's countenance? Does he with those guilty men described by Isaiah, say to the Almighty, "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?" (Is. lviii. 3.) Oh no! With diligence and humility he seeks what has interposed between him

and God; with penitence he cries, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;" with constancy he perseveres, like the Canaanitish woman in the midst of her discouragements, or like Paul when he thrice besought the Lord before he was answered: he besieges the throne of grace with supplications, till he has obtained the blessing.

The Lord exercises towards Cain his patience and long-suffering: instead of immediately punishing, he condescends to expostulate. He points out to Cain the unreasonableness of his anger: he exhorts him to subdue his resentment, and check his criminal passions: he declares that he also shall be accepted, if he exercise the same faith, humility, and sincerity as Abel: that without repentance, his sin must expose him to punishment; and that Abel entertained a cordial affection for him, and in all temporal matters was still his inferior. "And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted; and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

How hard must have been that heart which this mild remonstrance could not melt: but Cain continued insensible. No motives, however tender, no barriers, however sacred, can restrain the ungodly man when his passions are once excited. Burn-

ing with rage, corroded with envy, desirous of acquiring a pre-eminence without any competitor on earth, Cain became the murderer of his brother; of a brother to whom his heart ought to have been open, for whom he ought to have felt the tenderest love, but whom he could not endure, because the holiness of his life was a perpetual reproach to himself, and because he had received special marks of the divine approbation. Then Death secured his first victim among mortals; then a more painful wound than that of Abel was inflicted on the hearts of our first parents, when they considered that by them death came into the world: then were all those hopes of happiness from Cain which they had so fondly indulged, prostrated in the dust; then was the first redeemed sinner admitted into heaven: whilst the everlasting doors were opened and the eternal gates expanded to receive this son of Adam, this first-fruits of the sacrifice of Jesus, this leader of the "noble army of martyrs," new hallelujahs, louder accents of praise, of adoring wonder, and joy, fell from the harps of the heavenly hosts.

Christians, why should we tremble at death; it is converted into a friend, and it came first to visit the favourite of heaven. Believers, let the bleeding body of Abel teach you not to expect your happiness below; you are members of that church whose symbol is the cross; you are followers of that Saviour who was the man of sorrows; you are tend-

ing to that world where " those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, have come out of great tribulation." Persecutions you will meet with: be careful that like Abel religion be your only crime. Persecutors of the cause or children of God, whether by open violence, by secret insinuations, by reproaches or by scoffs, behold in Cain your archetype: his mark is fixed upon your forehead, his disposition rankles in your hearts.

The Lord saw and came to punish this murder: this blood cried to him for vengeance, and its voice was heard. To the question which he proposes to the murderer, " Where is Abel thy brother," Cain, hardened by sin, replies with impiety, with insolence and falsehood. But in vain is the attempt to deceive the Omniscient, and foolish is the expectation of impunity with the holy God, for those sins of which we have not repented. The Lord displays to him the horrour of his crime, and represents all nature as ready to become the instrument of divine vengeance against him. The ground which Cain cultivates is cursed with a new degree of barrenness: he is obliged to depart from the society of his friends and parents, and from the place where God more immediately manifested his presence, and to wander upon the earth, forlorn and detested by men, and abandoned by God. So surely is sin, by the

wise appointment of God, inseparably linked to sorrow both in this world and that which is to come.

Not softened to repentance, but full of terrour, he cries out "My punishment is greater than I can bear." How frequent are these horrours of soul in those who are still impenitent, and how awfully are they deceived, who suppose that they are the children of God, because they have felt them in a high degree. Read the history of the Old Testament and the New, and you will find that they have been experienced by the greatest enemies of God. What could exceed the anguish of Cain; what the quakings of the soul of Ahab; what the agony of Judas, which was so intolerable as "to make him flee to hell as a release, and embrace damnation as a refuge." And in the world of torments how awful are the terrours of the Lord which rest upon the souls of the accursed; how painful the "arrows of the Almighty which drink up their spirits." Woe then, I repeat it, to those who are resting in security, because they have been agitated and alarmed at the view of their sins and of the punishment which awaited them. How different are these exercises from those of real believers. They regard principally the guilt of their sin and not the weight of that misery which will follow them. While Cain cries, "My punishment," not my guilt, "is greater than I can bear;" while Pharoah exclaims, "Remove this plague," not this hard-heartedness, "from me;"

the penitent David cries, "My sin," not thy vengeance, "is ever before me;" the returning prodigal says," I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," not, I have been starving in a distant land. Real penitence drives the soul to God; these slavish terrours cause it to flee from him. Peter's hearers when truly alarmed, turn to the Redeemer; Cain seeks by employing himself in earthly occupations to lose these painful impressions.

Cain expresses his apprehension that every one that meeteth him will kill him as a common pest, dangerous and unworthy to live. But he was to be preserved alive as a memorial to others of God's knowledge of our most secret sins, and of his resolution to punish them, and as a monument of that misery which must ever attend guilt. The Lord therefore gave him a token that his life should not be taken from him by violence. "He went out from the presence of the Lord," from the place where he manifested himself, and retired to the land of Nod; where neglecting all the ordinances of religion, he became probably more and more corrupt. As his descendants increased, he built a city, which from his son, he called Enoch. Here his posterity resided till the flood. They were celebrated for the useful, ingenious, and elegant arts: Instruments of violence were in their hands; the harp and the pipe were at their feasts: abroad they were rapacious and violent; at home they were luxurious and de-

praved. In reading the list of them, we in vain seek to discover an individual who was a faithful servant of God. How poor, how miserable were they, notwithstanding their arts and pleasures!

We have, in the prosecution of this discourse, presented to you most of the practical lessons connected with this history—Let us however, before we conclude, remark

1. How inconceivably great may be the effect of an unholy parent's example. Who can calculate how many of the descendants of Cain were lost through his impiety! Criminal father, ungodly mother, who can tell how many thousand souls may in the day of judgment execrate thee as the author of their perdition, and imprecate the vengeance of the Almighty upon thee. Corrupting by thine example thine immediate descendants, they may communicate the infection to theirs, and they again to others through a long succession of ages. Their united curses shall at last gather round thee, and sink thee deep into despair.

2. Let us enquire which character we bear, that of Cain or Abel. I have already said that if our worship of God be merely formal and outward, attended by no holy affections and sanctified desires; if we be possessed with a self-righteous spirit, and only cry with the Pharisee, "Lord, I thank thee

that I am not as other men;" refusing to lie in the dust and with the unfeigned humility of the publican, exclaim, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" if we present our offerings in any other name than that of Jesus, and look for acceptance in any other mode than through his atonement and intercession; if we despise, envy, hate, reproach, vilify, or persecute the people of God, we bear the image of Cain. My brethren, are there no persons of this description within the sound of my voice? Let those whose consciences declare that they bear some traits of this character, instead of farther imitating Cain, by denying their crime, by attempting to conceal it from God, by quarrelling with the divine justice, by employing the time of God's forbearance in building cities, or earthly pursuits, in business or in pleasure—instead of this, let them instantly turn to the Lord; otherwise they shall find that "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" they shall sink under his curse; and thoughtless and insensible as they now may be, shall hereafter cause the regions of despair to resound with that agonized cry, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Are there on the contrary any, who feel that they are guilty, but look with faith to the great atonement; meek but zealous worshippers of God, bearing the fruits of righteousness, patiently submitting to afflictions and persecutions for the sake of Christ,

ready to lay down their lives rather than abandon him? Such have the character of Abel; like him they are beloved by God; with him their hearts and their voices shall hereafter be united in celebrating that "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

3. Abel, "being dead," says the apostle, "yet speaketh." Yes! from the height of heaven he addresses us; and how many important instructions does he communicate to us. He declares to us the efficacy of that blood of Jesus, by which he has obtained salvation: he shews us the duty of following the Redeemer through affliction, through persecution, through death itself: he teaches us the necessity of a constant and lively faith to support us in our trials and render our duties acceptable. He calls to you, young people, and reminds you that youth and health, that the tenderness and desires, the prayers and tears of parents, cannot shield you from the stroke of death. He bids us all remember that we may suddenly sink into the tomb; that there is not a moment of our lives in which we may not be summoned to the bar of our God. Oh! may these instructions sink deep into our souls.

4. "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel." It attracts not, but repels the thunders of divine indignation: It cries not for vengeance; but its language is, Grace, grace to the

guilty. Let us seek to be sprinkled with this precious blood; let us with this plea in our mouths draw near to God for pardon; let us continually look for grace and glory, for forgiveness and salvation, to that "great Shepherd of the flock," who was offered as a sacrifice to God, who was hated, persecuted, and murdered by his brethren. Though for shedding this blood they were accursed, scattered, and made a monument of divine justice; yet let our souls be washed in it and they shall be purified, forgiven, and prepared for heaven.

SERMON XII.

HEAVEN.

MATTHEW xxv. 34.

"*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*"

THE moralists and divines of every age have made frequent lamentations on the shortness and misery of human life. Man rises into being, enjoys some happiness, experiences much sorrow, and then sinks into the "house of silence." But shall the light never dawn upon the dreary cearments of the tomb? Shall corruption forever prey upon the mouldering carcase? Shall death hold his victims in bonds that shall never be broken? No: for as "it is appointed unto all men once to die," so "after that cometh the judgment;" at the sound of the trump of God, the dust so long inanimate shall spring into new life; and at this second advent of the Redeemer, the tenants of the grave shall appear before his sacred tribunal.

My text is taken from a description of the events subsequent to this resurrection: to this resurrection

so terrible to the wicked, since to them it is the commencement of eternal perdition; so joyful to the righteous, since it secures to them endless felicity; so interesting to all men, since it irreversibly fixes their destinies. All nations being gathered together before the judgment-seat of Christ, the actions of their past lives being accurately examined, their true character being displayed, and the most concealed motives of their conduct being exposed to the view of the assembled universe, the Judge with infinite benignity, shall address the pardoned and redeemed sinners whom he acknowledges as his children, and shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

My sole object in discoursing from these words, is to point out the constituents of that future felicity, which is here promised by the Saviour; the expectation of which is the prop and support, the consolation and triumph of every christian. Such a subject is of immense consequence. It is necessary to know the nature of our future enjoyment, that we may see the propriety of those self-denying duties enjoined by the gospel as means for its attainment, and be thereby induced sincerely to perform them; that the hopes of it may teach us to purify our souls, and may comfort us amidst all the trials, the agitations, and afflictions of life; and that the frequent contemplation of it may prompt the ardent tribute of

gratitude, thanksgiving, and praise to that God who has provided it for us, to that Saviour who has poured out his most precious blood to remove those obstacles to our salvation which were otherwise insuperable, and to that Holy Spirit who sanctifies and prepares us for heaven.

It is almost unnecessary to premise that whatever I can say on this theme, will fall infinitely below my subject. The painter who should essay to display upon his canvas the brilliancy and lustre of the sun, would be certain of failing in the attempt; how much weaker, when compared with the bright original, must be the most elevated description of those felicities, which even Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, declared to be unutterable, and of which the beloved disciple who had lain in the bosom of the Saviour asserted, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Nevertheless, some idea may be had of this glory to be revealed, by considering that it includes the renewal and glorification of the body; the expansion of the understanding, with proper objects for its employment; the perfection of holiness with a sufficient sphere for its exertion; the removal of every species of misery; the blissful society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; the vision and fruition of God and the Redeemer; and the certainty that these enjoyments shall be eternal.

1. In heaven *the bodies of the saints shall be renewed and glorified.* Corruption may prey upon them after they are laid in the dust; the particles which compose them may be scattered over every part of the earth, yet the Almighty will re-assemble these particles, and our bodies will rise *essentially* the same as they were when laid in the grave. But as they will be reared again by the Lord, in order that they may partake of his mercies throughout eternity, it will be necessary, lest they should be overborne by the abundant communications of his love, that certain changes should take place in them, which, without destroying their identity, will infinitely ennoble them. As in the spiritual resurrection, God does not create a new soul, but sanctifies that which was dead in sin, and gives it new principles, desires, and affections; so in the natural resurrection he will not create a new body, but will give to that which has lain dead in the tomb, new qualities and more exalted properties. Natural reason, unaided by revelation, cannot establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; much less can it teach us the precise changes that shall then take place in the bodies of believers. The scriptures, however, are sufficiently explicit on this subject. St. Paul tells us in the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the body "is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised

in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." And in the 3d chapter to the Philippians, he informs us, that "Jesus Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." In these two passages we have a satisfactory and clear enumeration of the principal differences between our earthly and heavenly bodies. Our earthly bodies are *corruptible*, subject to innumerable disorders, advancing daily to that state where they must loathsomely putrefy: our heavenly bodies, like the souls which shall animate them, will be *incorruptible* and *immortal;* disease and languishment shall never assail them; death shall have no power over them. Our earthly bodies are comparatively *dishonourable* and *vile*—unlike to that of Adam in Paradise, they are through our sins, exposed to deformity, defects and defilement. Our heavenly bodies will *beam with glory*; they will (as our Saviour assures us) shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father; they shall be lustrous, like the face of Moses when he descended from Sinai, or like that of Jesus when he was transfigured upon Tabor. Our earthly bodies are *weak;* our strength at best is inconsiderable and frail; it daily decays through the infirmities of age; and is liable to be destroyed by innumerable circumstances. Our heavenly bodies will be of vast and astonishing *power* and *force*, which shall be unmingled with impotence, and unexposed to diminution.

Our earthly bodies are *natural*, or (as the original word also signifies) *animal* ones; fitted for the low functions of animal life: Our heavenly ones will be *spiritual* ones, fitted to aid in the employments, to participate in the delights of an immortal spirit in its highest state of perfection. Our earthly bodies (it is the last and most important idea which St. Paul gives us on this subject) are *like that of fallen Adam*: Our heavenly bodies will be made *conformed to that of our blessed Saviour:* Not to that with which he travelled through Judea, experiencing misery, distress, hunger, pain, all the innocent infirmities of our nature; not to that which sunk down in agony at Gethsemane, and bled upon the cross; but to that in which he rose resplendent from the holy mountain, to that in which he shall come at last to judge the universe. O! blissful change, when wilt thou arrive! when shall these poor, feeble, disordered frames be thus ennobled and glorified through the grace of our God.

2. And as in heaven our bodies will be thus renewed, so also shall our *knowledge be increased, our understanding be inconceivably strengthened*, and be perpetually employed upon the noblest objects.—"Now," says St. Paul, "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." The cultivation of the understanding

affords us even here one of the highest gratifications which we can enjoy. There are few pleasures superior to those which are felt in strengthening the mind by study and meditation; in pursuing and apprehending truth; in passing from one discovery to another, and making each step of our advancement the foundation of farther improvement. But, alas! these pleasures have that imperfection which belongs to all earthly objects, and are mingled with many cares and difficulties. The weakness of our powers makes it necessary for us to proceed in our investigation after truth, by slow and laborious advances; to trace the mutual connexion and dependence of things by perplexing and painful deductions, and to stand in constant guard against prejudice, against the senses, against the imagination, against the passions, against the natural defects of our mind, which might lead us into error. And after such constant vigilance, after the sacrifice of health, of riches, of social enjoyments, of a thousand pleasures—what is gained? We know a few things superficially and indistinctly: we perceive many things, concerning which we must hesitate and doubt: we behold innumerable things which we will not be able to comprehend by all our labours and researches. "Our attainments in science resemble those stars that appear in a dark night; they are a few luminous points scattered at a distance from each other in a sky which is otherwise gloomy and obscure." Oh! how painful is it, my brethren, thus

to desire truth, to pursue it, and yet almost always to fail to apprehend it; to find ourselves almost always baffled, disappointed, doubtful or ignorant. It will not be so in the future world; there our understandings will be so strengthened, and the depths of nature, of providence and grace be so unveiled to us, that the decisions of reason will be equally easy, quick and certain: there no prejudice will mislead us, no passion will delude us, no trifling objects will distract us, no cumbersome body will weigh us down to earth; but the mind, privileged from error, shall travel on from truth to truth, from attainment to attainment, with increasing delight through interminable ages. O christians! how pure and serene, yet how rapturous will be our pleasure, when God shall give us in heaven that reality, of which the delights of science on earth were but the shadow. Contemplating God, the eternal source of truth, we shall behold truth itself unveiled and unclouded. "Our attainments will no longer be a few luminous points scattered here and there amidst an otherwise general obscurity, but a day without shadow, an ocean of light."— Then the order, the harmony, the universal beauty of nature shall be developed to us: then we shall see and adore in the whole conduct of providence, which is now so impenetrable to our feeble capacities, displays of infinite wisdom, of power and mercy, which will fill us with admiration and love. Then those mysteries of grace, which angels desire

to look into, shall be more fully unfolded to us than they could be by the united wisdom of all the inhabitants of earth. Then we shall study *in themselves* those perfections of God which we now see only through the medium of his works, which we now adore, though we so inadequately comprehend them. And how delightful will it be to be perpetually occupied with this exhaustless study; how joyous to have the mind, ever unwearied by the intensity of its application, prying deeper and deeper into the perfections of God; how ravishing thus to be occupied by infinity, to be lost and swallowed up by the greatness and immensity of the attributes of Jehovah.

3. As the bodies and the minds of the blessed shall be thus improved, so also shall *their holiness be perfected, and their wills be brought into a complete subjection to the will of God.* There "nothing that defiles shall enter;" there the "spirits of the just" are "made perfect." Believers, how delightful a prospect is this; you daily mourn over the remains of corruption within you; you daily lament that your will is so perverse, that your affections are so disordered, that temptations still have so much strength over you: wait but a short time, and glory shall entirely abolish in your souls the existence of that sin, the dominion of which has already been destroyed by grace. You will no longer complain of "a law in your members warring against the law of your mind," nor

"of the lustings of the flesh against the Spirit:" you will no longer be obliged to exclaim with the apostle, "O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death;" for it shall be thoroughly removed by the Saviour when you are put in possession of eternal life. There you will not sin, for all those causes which here lead into guilt shall be unknown. *There* is no evil society to entice you by their licentious principles or their irreligious conduct; you will be surrounded by none but the holy: *there* is no carnal body to tempt you to fulfil its lusts; your body will be so spiritualized as to be entirely under the direction of a purified and pious soul: *there* is no mistake as to your duty, for "in God's light you shall see light:" there is no forgetfulness of the presence and inspection of God, for you will be ever encircled by his brightness and glory: *there* is no evil world to ensnare your affections by its false lustre; its riches, its pleasures, its honours, will be more contemptible than the playthings of a child, when compared with the beauties of the new Jerusalem: *there* is no satan to deceive you; he gained admittance into paradise, but from heaven he is eternally excluded: *there*, there is no intermission of the divine influences; here they fall upon you drop by drop; there they shall pour upon your souls in a rich and unfailing torrent. In short, nothing will there remain which can in the most remote manner incite us to sin. No David will there have to

lament his falls, no Peter to weep for his denial of his Lord, no christian to pray, "Lord, lead us not into temptation." Every sincere believer shall then stand up in humble triumph, and whilst he ascribes his victory to the unmerited grace of God, shall rejoice that he has at length arrived at that state of complete purity, for which he has so long wished, and prayed, and laboured; that every inclination contrary to his duty is now completely taken away; that he shall no longer have to complain of the blemishes and sins that attend his best performances; that he shall never more have to lament the coldness and hardness of his heart; but that his soul shall burn unceasingly with the warmest love towards God, and the purest benevolence towards all his fellow-creatures. Saints of our God who have already arrived to this happy state, blessed indeed are ye! Whilst ye have entered into the port of rest, we are still exposed to the fury of the tempest: whilst ye have received the crown of victory, we are left to conflict with enemies and dangers.

4. Sin being thus completely abolished, all that *misery* and *sorrow* which entered into the world by sin, shall be abolished with it. This is another constituent of the heavenly felicity. Christians, no pains or infirmities of body shall there afflict you: After your convulsive struggle with death, they shall be felt no more: no anguish or grief of mind; for your fullest desires will be satisfied. There will

be no wicked men to vex you by their unholy deeds; no revilers to mock at you for your attachment to vital godliness; no slanderers to wound your good name, or to charge you with hypocrisy; no malicious enemy to oppress you; no unfaithful friend to grieve you. You will no longer have to watch by the sick bed of an expiring relative and receive his last breath, or to weep in anguish over his grave. There will be no widow or orphan to be consoled; no hardened sinner to warn; no brother afflicted by want, by sickness, or oppression, to be lamented; no blemishes or falls of the pious to be bemoaned. You shall partake of a joy that shall be unmingled with sorrow; of a joy worthy to be the gift of a God; worthy to be the purchase of the blood of his Son. Then, as the voice from heaven declared to the beloved disciple, "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away," (Rev. xxi. 4.) and in their stead will be "fullness of joy and pleasures forever more;" "for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed you, and lead you unto living fountains of waters." (Rev. vii. 17.) Then the recollection of our past trials, instead of paining, shall afford us delight. As Moses from the top of Nebo, looking back on the dangers of that wilderness which he had traversed, was more gratefully affected by his present security; as the victorious general feels renewed

satisfaction by recurring to the perils which he has endured; so shall our enjoyment be heightened by considering that our pilgrimage through this wilderness world, where we were encompassed by so many dangers, is forever at an end; that our warfare is finally and gloriously accomplished. Like Noah in the ark, when it had fixed on Ararat, we shall look from our secure height over the passage of a troubled life; and the winds, the waves, the tempests being ceased, shall enjoy the everlasting calm of heaven.

5. Christians, if your natures were thus perfected, if you were thus delivered from sin and misery, you could not but be happy, yet this happiness would be incomplete if it were solitary; God therefore has graciously resolved that in this eternal life, you shall have the *society of angels and glorified saints.*

The *angels* delight in your happiness. When man was first created, these "morning stars sang together, and these sons of God shouted for joy." (Job xxxviii. 7.) When the Saviour became incarnate for our salvation, a host of them appeared uttering praises and thanksgivings to God. (Luke ii. 13.) When a sinner repenteth, there is joy amongst them. (Luke xv. 10.) In the midst of the sorrows and temptations of our state, they minister to those that are heirs of salvation: with what warmth, then, will they welcome us to their blissful society;

with what transport will they lead us to the throne of God and the Lamb; with what joy will they relate the embassies of love which they discharged to us; the succours and deliverances which they unseen afforded to us, whilst under their protection we were training up for heaven.

We shall be united also *to all the good men* who have existed from the creation of the world. The scriptures clearly imply that we shall know all these saints in the kingdom of glory. Thus, you recollect, that the apostle Paul consoles himself more than once with the prospect of meeting in heaven those who had been converted by his ministry on earth; that it is made a part of our privilege to sit down with Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob; that Lazarus immediately remembered the rich man; that Peter in the transfiguration, knew Moses and Elias, notwithstanding they had died so long a period before him. My brethren, how unspeakably consoling is this anticipation: we shall be united in an immortal society with those with whom we have prayed, and suffered, and conversed, and gone to the house of God in company on earth: we shall be re-united to the pious husband, or wife, or parent, or child, or friend, who have gone to the enjoyment of their Saviour, leaving us desolate and afflicted. And besides these former acquaintances, we shall meet with those whom the narrow span of our life does not permit us to see on earth. The patriarchs,

the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the pious men who have animated us by their example or encouraged us by their writings, shall there be our friends and companions. It was a wish of St. Augustine, that he could have lived in the time of Paul, and beheld him delivering his defence before Felix: he has seen, what is more desirable, St. Paul shouting the praises of redeeming love before the throne of the Most High God: and we too, my brethren, shall see him and all the holy men from whom we are separated by distance of time, if we, like them, are faithful to the death. We shall meet, too, all that are separated from us now by distance of place. Interposing seas and mountains divide the children of God from each other in this our earth; we hear of many faithful disciples of Christ in the old world and the new, whose labours and exertions in the cause of their Saviour make us bless God that he has not left himself without witness in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: but, alas! we are prevented from associating with these followers of the Lamb, from being blest by their society. But, christians, we shall meet them hereafter, and shall never be divided from them more. O who can conceive how delightful will be that intercourse which we shall then enjoy with all the blessed spirits, and with all the church triumphant. No ignorance, no unkindly affection, no irregular passion, no blind zeal, no narrow and selfish views, no divisions in sentiment, no slanderous tongue shall impair our bliss; but the

most exalted wisdom, the most spotless purity and innocence, the most tender benignity and love will be united in their highest perfection in every member of this heavenly society: throughout all of them there will be a complete harmony in judgment, in will, and in practice; all of them will be united in love to that God, in gratitude to that Saviour, whose throne they encircle; all of them will be so completely cemented in affection to each other that the happiness of each particular one will become a common felicity. Selfish and censorious world, what have you to compare with this ennobling and rapturous intercourse, where every mind thus shines with light, and every heart thus burns with love?

6. My brethren, this is a blissful society, but what is it to the *vision and enjoyment of God and the Redeemer*, with which believers shall be made happy in heaven. St. John assures us that hereafter we shall be like God; for "we shall see him as he is." The Saviour also has promised to the pure in heart that "they shall see God:" and David expresses the same idea, when he exclaims "I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Do you ask, what is the precise nature of this vision of God, and of the enjoyment which thence results? We without hesitancy confess our ignorance; for clouds and darkness are round about thee, great God: we, short sighted creatures, know but little of thy nature or thy essence; we are totally unable

to comprehend the manner of that intimate communion with thee which shall be the portion of thy saints! But, my brethren, though we are unable to explain the particular mode of this enjoyment, yet we know that he who has formed an infinite diversity of animated beings, can communicate himself to them in an infinite variety of methods. We know that in heaven his immediate presence will make us more sensibly feel his love; that the emanations of his goodness will fill the utmost capacity of our souls; that thence will spring unfailing and unspeakable delight. We know that, surrounded by his glory, tasting perpetually of his mercy, all our desires will expire in his bosom, and triumphs of joy and of rapture will succeed.

And there too we shall be blest by the presence of our glorified Saviour—"I go," it was his consolatory address to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Father," it was his prevalent prayer in their behalf, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Yes! we shall see that glorified body, which he has taken into union with his divinity; that body, that eternal monument of redeeming love, which was once afflicted, and buffetted, and crowned with thorns and crucified; but which now is raised to the highest

dignity and glory : those arms which were extended upon the cross for your salvation, shall be opened to embrace you : that heart which was pierced for your offences, shall glow with affection to you : he who wept over Jerusalem shall rejoice at your redemption. O what joy will you feel in beholding him who hath loved you so much as to give his life for you, living and reigning forever and ever ! what joy, after having loved, and adored and served him below, to receive from his hand a crown of unfading glory, to be admitted into an intercourse with him, to dwell in his embraces, to hear him declare the scenes of woe and distress through which he passed to pluck you from the eternal burnings, and to confer the bliss of heaven upon you : what joy to follow him whithersoever he goeth, and to find in him a creator, a redeemer, a father, a tender friend. Blessed Jesus ! this is the felicity which our souls desire : Enjoying thy presence and partaking of thy love, we cannot be unhappy : and separated from thee, we should be miserable, amidst all the splendours of the new Jerusalem.

7. Finally, these pleasures, this glorious life, will be *without decay and without end.* They are not like the enjoyments of earth which require to be perpetually varied that they may not displease by their uniformity. Here we can never be weary, since there is no defect in the objects enjoyed, no weakness in the faculties enjoying. Here there is

no alternate succession of trouble and joy, no mixture of good and evil; there is no change, except by the augmentation of bliss. And as there is no decay, so neither is there any end. The blessed are not pained by reflecting that these enjoyments can be torn from them, but triumphing in the security of the divine promises, they confidently exclaim, "This God is our God forever and ever." This thought redoubles their joys and consummates their felicity.

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to give you an imperfect description of "the inheritance of the saints in light." But I must say with Job, "I have uttered what I understood not; things too wonderful for me which I knew not:" for the future delights must transcend the most elevated conceptions that man can have of them in this dark commencement of his existence, incomparably more than the highest extacy of which our nature is here susceptible, exceeds the dull, the undistinguishable perceptions of the infant in the womb. Yet forgive me, O God, that I have degraded these glories by my unworthy representation of them; and grant, that hereafter enjoying them, we may, from our own experience, form more suitable conceptions of them.

In reviewing this subject, let us,

1. Enquire whether we are prepared for this feli-

city; whether at the hour of dissolution we shall enter into "the joy of our Lord," or, forever banished from it, and lying in torments, shall see it only "afar off," and behold it only with envy, with rage, and self-reproach. This question may easily be decided, if we will be faithful in the examination of our hearts and lives. The Saviour who has purchased heaven for us, and who confers the crown of immortality, has plainly taught us who are the persons who alone shall dwell with him in glory. They are those, who having felt that they were wretched and undone, have fled to his cross for pardon, and to his Spirit for power to resist sin; have given themselves up to him in an everlasting covenant, and have accepted him as their Saviour and their king; have chosen God and heaven and holiness as their portion, and have laid up their best treasure and their dearest hopes there "where Jesus is, at God's right hand;" have mourned over their remaining imperfections, and have prayed and longed and laboured for complete holiness. If when you die, this be not your character, so sure as God is true, you must be excluded from these joys, and all your sanguine hopes of heaven be forever blasted. Notwithstanding the infinite mercy of God and the boundless merits of Jesus, no unsanctified soul shall ever be admitted into the new Jerusalem. Strictly then try yourselves: dream not away your lives in carnal security: be not satisfied till you have evidence derived from that word of God by which

you shall be judged, of your preparation for heaven; evidence, that will uphold your sinking spirit when contending with the last enemy, and that will brighten as you approach the light of eternity; evidence that will stand the scrutiny of that holy tribunal where God will search deep into our souls, and where the mere name of a christian will not be considered as constituting christianity.

2. We should be deeply humbled for our insensibility to blessings so immense, for the feebleness of our desires and longings for this felicity. We should naturally suppose that when such high joys were proposed to our hopes and expectations, the children of men would delight to lift the curtain which covers futurity, and gaze on the eternity of being, the consummation of holiness, the perfection of bliss, reserved for the pious; that believers especially would perpetually groan to be delivered from these fetters of flesh, which hold their souls in thraldom, and prevent them from mounting and winging their flight to the bosom of their Redeemer. But, alas! when we look around us in the world, how few do we perceive with these feelings and disposition: almost all men regard this world as their country, and consider themselves as inhabitants, not pilgrims in it; they had rather be in the body than with the Lord; and the presence of the Saviour, that presence which constitutes heaven, is the object of their dread. Ah! is this the disposi-

tion of a christian? Were these the feelings of a Paul, while panting for celestial joys, he cries, "I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better:" of a Peter, when with so much delight he tells the churches, "I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus hath shewed me:" of a John, who so joyfully responds to the Saviour, telling him, "I come quickly—Even so, Amen, come Lord Jesus." Let us imitate these holy men; let us study to acquire such a temper as will induce us to view life as a subject of patience and resignation, and death as a cause of triumph and joy: let us cultivate those feelings so forcibly expressed by St. Augustine: "O joy most exquisite, most excellent, most comprehensive; above which, in comparison of which, beside which, there is no joy! when shall I enter into thee, and behold my God that dwelleth in thee! what is it that detains me from him whom my soul loveth? How long shall it be said to my eager heart—Wait, wait patiently? And now, O Lord, what do I wish and wait for? surely it is for my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; surely it is for thy coming to the marriage that thou mayest admit me to the bride-chamber. Come quickly, Lord, and do not tarry; come and unlock our prison-doors, that thy released may walk before thee with a perfect heart; come, my light, my Redeemer, and set my soul at liberty, that I may give thanks unto thy holy name. How long shall I continue tossed on the

waves of this mortal life, separated from thee." Ah! my brethren, can you who are contented with earth, who long not for a better portion, suppose that you will dwell with these men from whom your temper is so discordant.

3. This subject is full of consolation for the believer. However severe may be your sufferings on earth, heaven will abundantly compensate you for them: fear not then the cross, since it will be succeeded by the crown. "If ye suffer with the Redeemer, ye shall also be glorified together." Ask those who are already received to the embraces of their Saviour, whether it is not better to experience affliction upon earth for the sake of Jesus, and then to dwell in heaven with him in endless joys, than to enjoy the vain delights of sinners, and to descend into everlasting despair. Ask the martyrs whether they regret that they submitted to all the tortures which the most ingenious cruelty could devise, rather than forsake their Lord. Ah! could we have but a single view of the redeemed, we should no longer hesitate to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth;" did we keep fresh upon our hearts the joys of heaven, we should smile in every sorrow, we should exult in death, and seeing the gloom of the grave dissipated by a light from heaven, we should regard it only as the path to immortality, the gate of glory.

SERMON XIII.

LOVE TO THE SAVIOUR.

JOHN xxi. 17.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

"I WILL not deny thee, I will die for thee, though all should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"—These were the confident declarations of Peter when the Saviour foretold his lamentable fall. They were not hypocritical expressions; his heart accorded with the words of his mouth, and he really believed that he would rather brave death clothed with its most awful terrours than deny his master. Alas! he forgot the frailty and deceitfulness of the heart when left to itself and unsupported by divine grace; a few hours after these protestations, he thrice denies any knowledge of Jesus, denies him with execration. This conduct was highly criminal, but he rose from it again by a deep repentance; for when after the third denial, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter:" this look penetrated to his soul, and caused his eyes to gush forth with penitential tears. The Saviour

saw the sincerity of his repentance, and in several conversations with him after the resurrection, restored to his afflicted mind pardon and peace. One of these conversations is related in the chapter whence our text is taken. Jesus having met his apostles in Galilee, according to his promise, converses with them in general, and then addresses his discourse to Peter in particular: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these," thy companions do? "The night on which I was betrayed, thou declaredst that although all others should deny me, yet wouldst not thou; and now thou hast preceded thy fellow-disciples to testify thy affection; these, however, are equivocal proofs of attachment; I ask thee then, Lovest thou me more than they do?" This question is three times repeated to remind Peter of his three-fold denial, and to give him an opportunity of repairing it by thrice displaying the disposition of a true disciple. Peter had learned humility by his fall; he no longer dares to compare himself with his fellow-disciples; but nevertheless he can appeal to the omniscience of his master for the sincerity of his affection: "Perhaps I should flatter myself in estimating the degree of my affection to thee, in declaring what I would undergo to attest it; but, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

My brethren, if Jesus Christ were to put the same question to each one of us, were individually to en-

quire of us, Lovest thou me, I fear that the greater part of us, instead of being able to appeal with humble confidence to the Searcher of hearts, would be abashed and overwhelmed with confusion. Yes! the humiliating confession must be made, there are few men who love the Saviour: the visible church of Christ is but small, and even in its bosom how many are there whose careless and worldly conduct proves that they are either utter strangers to this heavenly grace, or possess it but in the smallest degree. What a lamentable reflection is this, and what a heart must he have who can think of it without emotion! There are but few persons who love the Saviour: that is to say, almost all mankind are guilty of monstrous ingratitude, are blind to true excellence, are going thoughtlessly to perdition: that is to say, the prince of darkness rules upon earth, and is drawing down millions to his dreary habitation. In enquiring into the reasons of the general neglect of this duty, two principal ones have occurred to me. Many do not labour for the attainment of love to Christ, because deceived by natural emotions which somewhat resemble it, they falsely suppose they already possess it. Many do not labour for the attainment of love to Christ, because they have never solemnly pondered those impressive motives which should induce them to strive for it. Against these two causes we direct the two heads of our discourse, in which we will

I. Shew you the nature of true love to Christ:

II. Urge upon you a variety of motives to induce you to seek for it.

I. We must begin by giving *a general idea of love* as it subsists between intelligent beings. Love then is an affection resulting from the perception of excellencies in the persons beloved, causing us to desire the most intimate union with them, attracting the mind and the heart towards them, and making us to enjoy from an intercourse with them the sweetest pleasures. This is a definition of love in its most extensive sense; and hence it follows, that love to Christ is that grace whereby, upon a discovery of the Redeemer's matchless excellencies, the souls of believers are caused to thirst after a more intimate union with him, their minds and their hearts are withdrawn from other objects and fixed upon him, and they esteem an intercourse with him their chief joy.

But it is necessary, in order that we may be fortified against the deceptions of our hearts, and that we may know our true character, to consider more in detail the *foundation*, the *properties*, and *effects* of a true love to Christ.

What then is the *foundation*, the *ground*, or the

cause of love to Christ? In order that we should love any object three things are requisite; this object must have certain excellencies; these excellencies must be perceived by us; and there must be a conformity between these excellencies and the inclinations of our hearts. Where one of these circumstances is wanting there can be no love, and it is the concurrence of the three that is the foundation of love to Christ.

The Saviour has those excellencies which render him intrinsically lovely, and infinitely suitable to us. In himself, he is the perfection of beauty, the pattern of loveliness, the centre of all moral excellence; all the perfections that are scattered over the works of creation, have emanated from him the great Creator; they are only a drop from him the mighty ocean, a beam from him the brilliant sun. Every excellence is concentrated in him in an infinite degree, so that the eternal Father always beholds him with delight, and the splendid host of heaven gaze upon him with wonder and with love. Thus worthy in himself of our supreme affection, he is moreover a Redeemer perfectly adapted to our state and circumstances; he has precisely those graces, those dispositions and sentiments, which fit him to be the Saviour of perishing sinners, the fountain of joy to our miserable race: supremely excellent in himself he is no less so in the relation which he bears to us

But even though the Saviour possess all these excellencies, yet to us they are still invisible, and therefore, till in some manner they are presented to us, they cannot be effectual in moving our love. The diamond may have a dazzling brightness, yet we shall not admire it till it is brought from the caves of the earth where it lies concealed from observation, and presented to our view. Doubtless there are many persons in distant countries of whom we have never heard and who are deserving of our warmest attachment, but we cannot exercise this attachment till their amiable qualifications are made known unto us. In like manner the Saviour may possess supreme excellence, yet this excellence cannot move us till in some manner it is revealed to us. The heart will not be attracted except the mind perceives or fancies that it perceives some loveliness. God has therefore been pleased in the sacred scriptures to unveil to us the beauties of Immanuel, to display to us those glories which seraphs contemplate with ever new delight, to shew us the excellencies of his person and the graces of his heart, to give us, as it were, the portrait of this Redeemer, to sketch out every lineament and feature, that so we might perceive how deserving he is of all our love.

Still however this is not sufficient to kindle the holy fire of love for Christ: he may have divine endowments and celestial qualities; we may clearly

perceive all these endowments and qualities, and nevertheless the deepest enmity against him may rankle in our hearts. However cheering the light of the sun may be in itself, and however brightly its beams may shine around us, yet as long as the eye is distempered, the brightness of its beams, the clearness of its light, will afford not pleasure, but pain, because there is not a correspondence between these two objects. In like manner, however excellent the character of the Saviour may be in itself, and however clearly this character may be revealed to us, yet as long as the soul is distempered by sin, the clearness of these views will excite enmity, not love, because there is no correspondency between it and the corrupt inclinations of the sinner's heart. If the beauties of Jesus were conformed to the taste and relish of our souls, nothing would be requisite to excite our love for them but to make them known to us; but since they are holy beauties, and our souls naturally have a tendency to sin, it is plain that in proportion as they are manifested, must our enmity be roused. It is for this reason that persons under their first convictions of sin frequently feel dreadful heart-risings against God and the Saviour. They have a true view of the infinite holiness, the spotless purity, and the inflexible justice of the divine character; but as yet their minds are not conformed to these attributes, and therefore the contemplation of them excites nothing but enmity. It is for this reason

that the damned souls though they have a distinct view of the character of Jesus, do nevertheless continually blaspheme and curse; because though the character of Jesus is infinitely amiable, and their views of it clear, yet it does not correspond with their vitiated propensities and sinful desires. It is evident then that a correspondency of heart is the third thing that is requisite to produce true love to Christ: And this correspondency can be produced only by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost renewing our minds; giving us new tastes, relishes, and inclinations; causing us to hate what we once loved, and love what we once hated. When this change of sentiments is made, when we are thus new-born, then, and not till then, the heart will be attracted by the beauties of Immanuel, will flow out in love towards him, will accord with the lips when they exclaim, "He is the fairest among ten thousand, he is altogether lovely."

Such is the origin of love to Christ. Let us sum up what we have said on this point in a single sentence. Love to Christ is produced by the Holy Spirit, who shews us in the scriptures the real character of Christ, who changes our hearts so that they may become conformed to this character, and thus fills our souls with admiration of the glories, with love of the excellencies of the Redeemer.

Ah! my brethren, how many of you are there whom this observation should cause to tremble! How many of you who suppose that you have a sincere, spiritual affection for this Redeemer, whilst you have no other love than that which is founded on nature, custom, education, or partial and unscriptural views of Christ? How many who suppose that they have always loved the Saviour; that their natural dispositions were affectionately inclined to him? Beware; you are deceiving your own soul; you are building your house upon the sand: when the floods come, and the waves beat, and the winds blow, instead of affording you shelter, it will fall and crush you in its ruin. You are confiding in a "refuge of lies which will perish when God taketh away the soul." A true love to Christ can be founded on nothing short of a renewed mind and a changed heart. Do you doubt of this? Follow me in my investigation, and you will find that your love is radically defective. Attend whilst I pass from considering the origin, to an examination of the *properties* of a true love to Christ, and you will find that you do not possess this heavenly grace.

First Property of love to Christ: It is *enlightened;* that is to say, it knows and delights in the real character of the Saviour. There are many who form partial and unscriptural notions of Christ; who conceive of him as all mercy without justice or holiness; who strip him in their conceptions of those at-

tributes which are opposed to their corruptions, and retain only those to which the natural heart has no repugnance; and because they feel some affection for this phantom of their own creation, they call this affection, a love for Christ. The believer on the contrary looks only to the sacred scriptures to find the character of Christ; his desires, his wishes, the bias of corruption, are not permitted to alter the portrait drawn by the pencil of heaven: he adds no trait, he detracts no feature, in order to lull himself to security and rest. The Christ whom he loves is not that fantastic image which sinners have formed, who connives at guilt, who permits men with impunity to trample on the authority of God, and is armed with no thunders. No, the Christ who has engaged the affection of believers is a being in whom spotless holiness is united with the tenderest compassion; who regards the honour of his Father as well as the miseries of mortals; who has not only manifested his grace by dying when we must have died eternally without his interposition, but who will also display his justice by sentencing the impenitent to endless despair.

My brethren, it is of vast importance for you to attend to this property of love. Many souls are in hell, who doubted not that they would have entered the kingdom of joy, and who with equal surprise and terrour awoke in the eternal flames. They formed to themselves an idol which they loved and

worshipped. In this idol were reserved those perfections of Christ against which the enmity of the heart is not excited; those holy and pure perfections of the Redeemer which are opposed to corruption, were laid aside, and in their stead qualities were substituted which would not be inconsistent with the reign of sin. This visionary being, which has no prototype in nature, was called Christ; they indulged affection towards it, they supposed it would save them; alas! it was an idol which had no existence except in the imagination of the framer, and which perished together with him.

Second Property of love to Christ; it is *ultimate*: that is to say, it terminates on this Saviour as its end, and does not regard him merely as a mean to farther blessedness. It is very possible for an unregenerate man to feel certain glows of affection when he sits down and considers the inestimable benefits which Christ has procured for our race; but this instead of being a spiritual attachment, is only a disguised self-love. If I love Christ merely because he can rescue me from hell and bring me to heaven; if I love him only because he can benefit me; it is plain that this pretended attachment to him, is only an attachment to my own interests and happiness. Christians have a more generous love than this; they love their Redeemer, not merely because he can procure for them incalculable benefits, but because in himself, and without any

consideration of his benefits, he is worthy of all their desires. If there were no heaven to hope, no hell to fear, their attachment would still continue, because those qualities of Jesus which are the foundation of it are immutable. It is true that the remembrance of the benefits which he has bestowed or promised, gives new warmth to their attachment: nevertheless it is the giver and not the gift which engrosses their heart; Christ is preferred before his benefits. We do not regard him as a real friend who loves us only so far as we can subserve his interest; we do not regard her as an affectionate wife who loves only the portion and not the person: in like manner we cannot regard that as a true love to Christ, which is founded only on a consideration of the blessings which he brings, whilst his personal excellencies are forgotten. "Not thine, dear Lord, but thee."—This must be the exclamation and the feeling of our soul.

Third Property of love to Christ: it is *supreme*, and predominates over every attachment to the objects of earth. Believers behold in him infinitely more beauty and excellence than the world can afford, and they therefore see nothing here below that can rival him in their affections. Their heart is the image of heaven where Christ reigns supreme, and all is submissive to him. Though other affections are indulged by them, yet it is always in subordination; earthly objects which bear the

stamp of imperfection cannot dispute their heart with the adorable Son of God. Christ himself enumerates those objects to which we are most justly and most strongly attached, and assures us, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." And St. John also, speaking of a supreme love, says, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father," which co-exists with that of the Son, "is not in him." Except therefore you have such an affection to Christ, that you would sacrifice the dearest earthly enjoyments, nay, life itself rather than abandon him, you have not that love which he requires.

Fourth Property of love to Christ: It is *permanent*. It is not like those streams in the desert of which Job speaks, which sometimes rushed forward in an impetuous torrent, and at others, were entirely dried up; it resembles rather a mighty stream, steadily rolling its waves along, and growing deeper and wider, till it empties itself in heaven, the ocean of love. What indeed should cause it to cease? It is not wonderful that human attachments should be dissolved: we soon get to the bottom of a creature's perfections, and enjoy all that is to be enjoyed; but it is otherwise with the Redeemer. As we advance, glories rise upon glories, beauties

after beauties develope themselves, and throughout eternity excellencies before unknown will be meeting our eyes and affording new aliment to the flame of love. No: love to Christ is not a dazzling meteor which endures for a moment and then leaves us in darkness; like the sun it steadily pours forth beams which enlighten and warm. It endures in every period of life: it attends us to the tomb, and is unhurt by the stroke of death. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loveth us." It is true that this love is not always in the same vigour, that it sometimes languishes and puts forth but few acts; but the principle always remains; the soul still tends towards the Saviour, thirsts and longs for a closer union with him, and will not repose till it reclines on his bosom.

These appear to me the principal properties of love to Christ: let us now consider a few of its *effects*.

First Effect: *A chearful, constant, and universal obedience to his commandments.* "If any man love me, he will keep my words," says the Saviour. Yes, love to Christ is always attended with a holy fear of offending him, and a holy desire of obeying him;

believers therefore are serious in enquiring what is the will of their Lord, and diligent in obeying it. This obedience is *chearful*, because it is the labour of love, the service of a dutiful child to which he is impelled by affection, and not the constrained performance of the affrighted slave. He who loves Christ finds a present sweetness as well as a future reward in fulfilling the laws of his master. This obedience is *constant:* those who are animated by this heavenly flame are not satisfied with a perpetual vicissitude of sins and repentance, of repentance and sins; they are not contented like those mentioned by the prophet, to swear now by the Lord and then by Malcham; to speak now the language of Canaan, and then that of Ashdod; to go now one step forward in the path of duty and then to recede another in the path of guilt: no, they strive for a uniform service, they desire steadily to perform the laws of Christ, and to have their whole lives devoted to him. This obedience is *universal:* they do not select from the commandments of Christ, those that are most agreeable to them, and neglect others; as Christ died for all sin, so they strive to die to all sin. They make war upon the whole host of iniquities; there are no Agags whom they wish to spare from the general devastation; no Delilahs or Drusillas, favourite vices which cling around the heart, that they are not willing to throw from their arms with loathing; no sins so small that they can view them without

emotion ; the very infants of this Edom they seize, and dash against the stones. Difficulties, dangers, afflictions will not deter them from obedience : like the martyrs of old they will not count even their lives dear unto them that they may win Christ ; they will follow whithersoever he leads, " through evil report and good report," through terrours and temptations, through a sea and a wilderness, through fiery serpents and sons of Anak. When in the discharge of their duty they meet with sorrows from which nature recoils, love stronger than nature urges them forward, and makes them force their way through a host of woes rather than forsake their Master.

Second Effect : *A love to every thing whereby Christ is displayed.* This effect embraces many particulars. If Christ be loved, the *Holy Spirit* who " takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto us," will be loved also : we shall gladly cherish his dictates and motions upon the heart ; we shall listen to his voice directing us in our duty, with joy receive his testimony in the inner man, open our souls for the reception of his influences, and be careful not to quench, to grieve, or resist him. If Christ be loved, his *scriptures* which contain his will, his promises, his threatnings will be loved also : " O how love I thy law ; it is my meditation all the day ;" is the language of him who has this affection. If Christ be loved, his *ordinances* where he is wont to

meet with his people will be most dear: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; a day in thy courts is better than a thousand:" this is the sentiment of *their* hearts whose affections are fixed upon Jesus, and who attend his ordinances not to pay him a cold formal visit, but to enjoy delicious intercourse with him. If Christ be loved, his *children* who bear his image will be loved: "By this," saith the Saviour, "shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another." If we admire the perfections of the Lord, we must delight to see these perfections enstamped upon any of his creatures; if we love him we cannot be indifferent to those who are the objects of his tenderest affection. If Christ be loved, his *cause* and *interest* will lie near our hearts: if his mercies be despised, his authority contemned, his glories overlooked by a thoughtless world, his friends are deeply grieved, and exclaim with David, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law;" or with Jeremiah, "Because you will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for you." On the contrary, if the cause of Christ flourish, if sinners be converted unto him, and his people excited to new diligence in his service, the souls of those who love him swell with higher and purer joy "than when their corn and their wine increase." In one word, whatever displays Christ, though it be but a glimpse of him, is precious to those who love him; whatever bears his impress, though it be in a faint manner, is most dear to their souls.

Third Effect: *A longing for his presence;* which is necessarily accompanied with a delight in his society, and a grief for his absence. There can be no love in us, if we do not thirst and pant after his presence; if we do not desire that here below he would come to our souls with richer communications of his grace and love, and that beyond the grave he would cause us ever to be with him.—And if these be our sentiments, our hearts are frequently breathing forth such language as this, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; come, take possession of this cold and senseless heart; subdue it to thyself; destroy those sins which render me so unlike to thee; speak to me, tell me I am thine; reveal to me more clearly the glories of thy person, the smiles of thy face; let me once be assured of my interest in thy love, and then hasten the period when I shall be delivered from the thraldom of flesh, and borne to that better world where I cannot but be happy, since I shall be with thee." These are the natural expressions of a heart that is inflamed with love; and if such be our sentiments, we must mourn and grieve whenever the Saviour appears to depart from the soul: then the greatest profusion of outward blessings cannot comfort us; in the midst of them we shall still sorrowfully seek the Beloved of our souls, exclaiming, "O that I knew where I might find him; I would go even to his mercy-seat." And when at last he lifts upon us the light of his countenance, when he says, "Fear not,

I am thy salvation;" oh! then his friends experience a pleasure which they never did find, and which they never will find in earthly delights; they cry out with rapture, "We have found him whom our soul loveth; we have found him, and will not let him go:" their exulting hearts break out into strains of thanksgiving, joy, and praise.

Thus I have shewn you, my brethren, the nature of true love to Christ. I pray you to apply the tests which have been given, to your own consciences; to suffer this matter no longer to be in suspense; to form an immediate decision of this question, "Do I love Christ, or do I not." It is too important a matter to be in suspense, for heaven or hell hangs upon its determination. Be impartial, since yours is not the final nor supreme judgment; since your judgment must be reversed, if it be not according to truth. Do you still hesitate whether to form this decision? Attend to the

IId. Head of our discourse;

In which we will give you some *motives* to this love; motives which are sufficiently powerful, if you will act as a reasonable being, to induce you no longer to protract a decision on this point.

From the variety of motives which occur to me, I select only two: love to Christ is *reasonable* and *pleasant*.

1. Love to Christ is a *reasonable* duty. When we urge you to the practice of piety, we urge you to nothing but what can be defended upon the principles of the coolest reason, but what is incumbent upon you as rational beings. It is essential to the heart to love; it must cease to beat before it can cease to love: the only question then is, what shall be the object of its supreme attachment, the things of earth or the great Redeemer? I reply, it is reasonable that the Redeemer should possess this attachment, because he has incomparably greater excellencies, has conferred upon us inconceivably greater benefits, and can do for us infinitely more than the things of earth. These three ideas are so many proofs of the reasonableness of a supreme love to Christ.

He has incomparably greater excellencies.—Accumulate, heap one upon another all the qualities which can captivate a feeling heart, they are all perfectly combined in him. He is "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person." Every perfection is found in him in a degree far beyond the conception of the most exalted seraph; the splendid host of glorified immortals can devise no higher source of felicity than to behold, admire, and serve him. Summon up all the objects of earth on which your heart is fixed; place them by his side; do you not see that they diminish, that they contract to a point, to a nothing, when com-

pared with him. On what article will you institute a comparison between these idols who possess your affection, and the mighty Saviour? On that of *power?* His arm upholds the universe; upon it universal nature fixedly hangs. On that of *wisdom?* His eye at one glance pervades all being, and runs through the past, the present, and the future. On that of *permanence?* "From everlasting to everlasting he is God." On that of *mercy?* Angels confess that their faculties are too weak to comprehend his goodness, and their tongues too feeble worthily to celebrate it. Yes, if excellence and perfection be the ground of attachment, Jesus must have our hearts.

But besides this, he also demands your attachment from the consideration of *what he has done for you.* Think of his benefits, and then tell me, is it not reasonable you should love him? A few years ago you did not exist; a few years ago this body which is so admirably constituted, this soul which is endowed with such noble faculties, were not in being: who then called you from the womb of non-existence and made you what you are? Who but Christ, "without whom not any thing was made, that was made?"—Having created us he also preserves us. This nice and complicated machine which he has formed, would soon run into disorder if he did not continually touch its springs. If he

were at this time to withdraw his supporting influence, in an instant, in the "twinkling of an eye," the voice of him who speaks to you would falter, would expire in death, and the ears of you who hear me, would be closed by the touch of dissolution. Is this all that he has done for us? No, he paid the price of our redemption; he submitted to woes unutterable to raise us to glory.—Behold him in the garden crushed down under the weight of our sins, and experiencing agonies unutterable: see him on Calvary; justice can find nothing in him to condemn, yet "he is smitten for us, and afflicted:" the cross is red with his blood; our iniquities encompass him and stab him to the soul; the vials of divine indignation are poured out upon his sacred head, and he exclaims in agony—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Which of those earthly objects, which steal away your soul from Christ, has done as much as this for you.

And finally, what can they do for you in comparison to *what Christ can and will do*, if you give him your affections? They can bestow on you only trifling gratifications whilst you are on earth, and they make no provision for that eternity which lies beyond the grave. All those things which you here love, and eagerly pursue cannot, when you leap the gulph of time, interpose between you and eternal misery. The delicacies of Dives, the full barns of

the rich fool, the great possessions of the young ruler, have long since ceased to delight them. The pomp of Herod and the rhetoric of Tertullus have not been able to hinder the flames from enwrapping their tortured bodies. Foolish men! had they fixed upon the Saviour those affections which were given to the world, they had now been triumphing in the regions of glory, instead of lamenting their misery in the dungeons of despair! Foolish men! whilst they now cast a mournful look across the impassible gulph which separates them from heaven, they are obliged to confess that the world mocks its followers with delusive promises of happiness, whilst Jesus alone affords a felicity commensurate with the faculties, co-eval with the existence of the soul. Unite all these ideas, and you cannot hesitate to acknowledge that it is reasonable for you to love the Saviour. I present you with a

Second Motive: It is *pleasant*. Ye mortals, who in search of pleasure are pursuing airy phantoms which cannot satisfy you, are embracing vain shadows which elude your grasp, come and learn where true delight is to be found. The exercise of a true love for Christ and nothing short of this will render you happy. If earthly love affords delight, how much more rapturous must be the sensations resulting from divine love? What joy springs from the interchange of affection between the soul and its

Redeemer? What joy to behold his smiling face and pour out before him the warm effusions of the heart? Yes! in every situation of life the exercise of love to Christ affords the purest satisfaction, but its effects are more especially seen in those seasons when earthly loves can profit us little, in *affliction*, in *death*, in *judgment*.

When *adversity* presses hard upon us, and the clouds of *affliction* lower around, he who has placed his supreme affection upon the earth, must be unhappy. When worldly enjoyments are wrested from him he must cry out with the Danite, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?"—How different the situation of him whose soul glows with love to Christ! Like Job when bereft of every temporal delight he can look upward and behold his Redeemer living: he can exclaim, "I have still a friend to go to who has wisdom to guide me in my perplexities, who has mercy to solace me in my sufferings, who has power to deliver me from my distresses, and who has engaged to deliver me so soon as it shall be best for me. This tender friend beholds me contending with sorrows, and he mingles with them the consolations of grace; why should I repine or be dejected? I have always found that his help is nearest, that his sympathy is greatest, when earthly supports have been torn from me. In such seasons I have often found him charming my griefs to rest, and causing me to rise above the

pressure of outward sorrows. The remembrance of his past goodness inspires me with confidence in my present sufferings; and knowing that he loves me better than I love myself, I lean without disquietude on his promises, his providence, and grace."

Pass from the season of affliction to the hour of *death.* When the man who has no love for the Saviour comes to this eventful hour, his situation is indeed dreadful. He is about to be torn from all that he loved and valued: earth recedes from his eyes, and with it recede all his enjoyments: he struggles still to remain, but the stronger arm of death prevails, and pulls his shuddering, reluctant soul into unknown and unloved regions. How different are the sentiments of him whose soul burns with love to Christ! "Behold me then," he exclaims, "just ready to touch the object of my hopes and desires; just ready to enter into the presence of that Saviour whom, though now I see him not, I love; beholding whom I shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Vain world! I quit you without regret; I leave you with joy. My soul is flying to its centre, is returning to its rest. Death! let the wicked tremble at thee; I hail thee as my friend. Why, why dost thou delay thy stroke? The voice of my beloved calls me, and my heart longs to rest in his embraces." It is with such transports of joy and holy impatience that his soul

leaps into the presence of God, that his heart springs into the arms of Jesus.

And when the trump of God shall assemble the world to be judged, oh! what pleasure will it afford to remember that our Judge is our friend; how will this enable us to stand unappalled amidst the shrieks of the despairing, and the dissolution of worlds. Oh! will it be worth nothing to have a warm affection for the Redeemer at that decisive day when we shall feel all the emphasis of that apostolic denunciation, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha," (1 Cor. xvi. 22) accursed when the Lord comes. The great point of examination for those who have enjoyed the gospel, then will be, whether they have truly loved the Saviour; and if we be found without this grace, either omnipotence must be subdued, or we be cast down into hell. But while the doom of those who neglect the Redeemer shall be so awful, his friends shall view him with adoring gratitude, and shout, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." They shall hear from his lips those cheering words, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord;" and shall love him throughout eternity without weariness, without intermission, without imperfection.

SERMON XIV.

REMEMBRANCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

CANTICLES i. 4.

"We will remember thy love."

"IF I forget thee, O Jerusalem," exclaimed the pious Levite when at a distance from his beloved country and in captivity at Babylon; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem before my chief joy." With how much greater warmth and energy should christians, who are here below in a state of exile from their true country and weighed down by fetters of flesh, pronounce similar vows with respect to their Redeemer. Since it is through the blood of his cross that every temporal enjoyment, every spiritual privilege, every eternal hope flows to them: since from it result all that they have, all that they are, and all that they expect, with what emphasis should they cry, "If I forget thee, compassionate Saviour, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, bleeding, suffering Jesus, let my

tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not thee before my chief joy." These should be our habitual sentiments; we should never forget the glories or the mercies of that Redeemer who has ransomed us with his blood: but especially on such a season as the present when we have met together to celebrate a sacrament which was instituted by those tender and solemn words, "Do this in remembrance of me," a sacrament whose great design it is to be a memorial of the dying love of Christ, on such a season we should surely drive from our minds all inferior objects, and centre our thoughts and desires solely on the mercy and kindness of our Lord. On such a season we should resolve with the mystical spouse, "We will remember thy love." Be still then, worldly cares, solicitudes, and pleasures, while we meditate on the grace of our Saviour: awake up, every faculty of our soul, whilst we are considering this delightful subject. And do thou, blessed Jesus, assist us by thy grace; give us clearer views and a more feeling sense of thy wondrous love: may it fill us with admiration, gratitude, and affection, and constrain us to offer ourselves to thee at thy table, a holy and a living sacrifice. Amen.

As it is the spouse of Christ who utters the words of our text, it is plain that the *love* of which she speaks, does not mean that general love of benevolence which the Redeemer entertains for all mankind, but that intimate, special, complacential re-

gard which he indulges towards his real followers. Taking the text in this, which is obviously its true sense, we shall

I. Enquire into the nature of the Saviour's special love.

II. Prove that it is the duty of christians to remember it.

III. Shew how this remembrance should regulate the sentiments of the heart, the words of the mouth, and the actions of the life.

I. We are to *enquire into the nature of the Saviour's special love.* And here, my brethren, I so much feel my insufficiency to do justice to this part of my discourse, that fearful of degrading it by my feeble representations, I am almost ready to leave it unhandled. "The angels" themselves, as the apostle informs us, "desire to look into it;" in contemplating it, they feel the weakness of created wisdom; they feel that nothing but Divinity can comprehend the full extent of divine love. Standing on the brink of this abyss of mercy, these exalted intelligences cast forth their most penetrative views; but unable to fathom it, are constrained to exclaim with adoring wonder, "O the depth of the riches of the goodness of Christ!" If angels then, who dwell in the source of light, whose capacities are so

inconceivably expanded, find nevertheless their conceptions too limited properly to estimate a Saviour's love, and their tongues too weak worthily to celebrate it—O how little can poor ignorant mortals know!

But whilst this reflection would discourage us from proceeding, let a sense of duty and the pleasantness of the task, induce us to follow the guidings of the holy scriptures, and to enquire into the properties of the Saviour's special love.

1. This love is *everlasting;* that is to say, it did not commence in time, but existed from eternity; and it will not terminate while eternity endures: like its divine source it has neither "beginning of days nor end of years."

That the special love of Christ towards his children has existed from eternity, is proved by all those texts which speak of the everlasting covenant between the persons of the Most Sacred Trinity for the Redemption of man, and of the consent of the Son to become our pledge and surety. It is proved by all those texts which speak of him, as having his delight with the children of men, and as a Lamb slain in the counsel of God before the foundation of the world. It is proved by all those texts which speak of "the choice of his people according to the eternal purpose which the Father purposed in him."

I do not enlarge on this part; I merely mention this fact that it may warm and enliven our devotions; for say, christians, what strains can rise sufficiently high to celebrate such love as this? Shall a few faint and interrupted emotions of gratitude be esteemed a sufficient return for that rich tide of divine love, which, having no source in time, springing from the abyss of everlastingness, runs parallel with the duration of God? Shall nothing but a few transient remembrances be given for an affection which resided in the heart of the Saviour, before a single note of adoration to his Maker had fallen from the harp of the first-created seraph; before "the morning stars had sung together" at the birth of nature; or "the sons of God," the splendid host of angels had "shouted for joy" at the manifestation of creative power: for an affection which thought of us with compassion, and devised the stupendous plan of salvation long, long before we started from the womb of nothingness; long before time begun its course, and when nothing existed throughout the universe but the presence and perfections of the adorable Trinity? No, my dear brethren, let our whole "souls and all that is within us" unite in shouting praises to that Saviour, whose "mercy is from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear him."

This mercy is "*to everlasting*:" It is fixed and unchangeable, and like its author, "is the same to-

day, yesterday, and forever." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed; saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "In a little wrath he may hide his face from his children for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy upon them, saith the Lord their Redeemer. If they break his statutes and keep not his commandments, then will he visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." That love which drew them to repentance when they were wandering from God, shall much more preserve them when they are penitent, and shall never be taken from them. Other unions may be dissolved; the union between soul and body, intimate as it is, must for a time cease at death; but the union between Christ and believers, never will be dissolved: neither life nor death shall be able to separate them from him. Friends and connexions may be taken from us; but whilst our tears flow because the ties which united them to us are broken asunder, and the hearts which once beat high with affection to us lie cold and senseless in the grave, we are consoled by the recollection that Jesus still lives, still lives for us, still lives to make us happy by his love. "Having loved his own, he will love them to the end;" to the end of

life, to the end of time, throughout eternity. Though man, the slave of error, whim and caprice, may become the relentless enemy of his fellow-man whom he once caressed as a friend, yet Jesus will "set his friends as a seal upon his heart," and "preserve them by his power through faith unto salvation." Long after the angel of the Lord "shall have lifted up his hand to heaven, and sworn by Him who liveth forever and ever, that time shall be no longer;" long after the earth shall have been consumed by the flames of the judgment-day, shall you believers, received to the palace of the King of kings, enjoy those raptures which result from your Redeemer's love; and as your souls shall continually dilate and your capacities enlarge, so shall the manifestations of his kindness be more abundant, and your joys more elevated and full. O how precious is such a Saviour! how inestimable is such unfailing love! Let the men of the world busy themselves in the eager pursuit of perishable vanities. Alas! when "the fashion of this world shall have passed away," with what bitter, what unavailing anguish will they lament that they did not secure an eternal love on which their eternal souls might rest.

2. The love of Christ is *most generous;* since it was *undeserved, unsolicited,* and *disinterested.*

It was *undeserved.* This necessarily results from the former property. Before we existed, nothing

could be due unto us: a love therefore which had respect to us from eternity, must be unmerited. Besides, believers as well as others are born corrupted and defiled, with no loveliness to excite the affection of a holy Redeemer. Believers, as well as others, are "by nature children of wrath;" and before their renovation by his blessed Spirit, lived in a constant course of enmity and disobedience to God. Surely such persons could merit nothing from the Saviour. I mistake; they merited much: they merited the flames of divine wrath, eternal perdition in hell. Yet even in this condition, Jesus communicated to them the riches of his love and the blessings of his covenant. But why do I stop to prove that the love of Christ is undeserved. It is a truth which is written on almost every page of the scriptures with a sun-beam: The great object of this sacred volume is to point out the free grace of the Saviour, as the only hope of the guilty, the undeserving, and the perishing. Christians, your sentiments accord with these representations. You abhor the thoughts of being saved otherwise than by free and unmerited grace: you joyfully lie down in the dust, that the crown may be placed upon the head of your Saviour: you renounce all self-righteousness and self-dependence, and build your hopes on undeserved mercy. Alas! ill would be our lot, did the Saviour regulate his love to us by our merits! How soon would he dart forth his thunders and sink us in the flames? My brethren, how much

does this trait ennoble the love of the Saviour. He was moved, not by our merits, but by our miseries; he had compassion upon us, though we were enemies, rebels, slaves of satan, heirs of hell.

But though we were thus undeserving, yet perhaps our solicitations were so strong as to move him to this display of mercy? By no means—for it is a new proof of the generosity of this love that it was *unsolicited.* What creature urged him to undertake for sinners, and to enter into that stipulation with the Father, which was made infinite ages before a creature lived? In answer to what petition of mortals was it that he cried, "Lo, I come;" I come to fulfil thy law and undergo its penalty: "I delight to do thy will, my God?" Who is the mortal that ever offered to the eternal Son a prayer to descend from his throne and assume our nature? No, no! It was his own self-moving goodness which alone induced him thus to act. He saw that we were perishing, and without waiting for our cries, reached forth deliverance and proffered us salvation.

But was not the Saviour induced thus to act by interested or selfish views? No! his love was entirely *disinterested.* The Creator of all things, creatures could not add to his glory: possessed of infinite happiness, we could not increase his felicity. He enjoyed supreme beatitude from the immensity of his own being and perfections, and from the ho-

som of his Father, before we had an existence; and he would have retained this beatitude, though we had never lived. He had then no selfish motive to lead him to interest himself for us: it was only the overflowings of his benevolence which made him interpose in our behalf. And does not such love deserve love? shall we bury such kindness in ungrateful forgetfulness?

2. This is an *efficient* and *powerful* love. However sincere the affection of mortals for us may be, yet so impotent are they that they can supply but an inconsiderable portion of our wants, or afford us but a trifling share of blessedness. We have the guilt of sin to be purged from our conscience; the dominion of sin to be overthrown in our souls; the punishment of sin to be averted from us. We have a God offended by our iniquities, to whom we must be reconciled; an unholy heart to be sanctified; the christian graces to be implanted and cherished. We have to conflict with the king of terrors; to pass into an awful eternity. We have the diversified needs of an indigent nature to be satisfied; the void of a heart which sighs after perfect felicity to be filled. Where can we find succours sufficient for the supply of these necessities, and the attainment of these blessings? Where, merciful Saviour, but in thy powerful love? If conscience condemn us, his peace-speaking blood can assure us, and enable

us to shout with the apostle, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If our corruptions rage and struggle, his Spirit can subdue them, and render us more than conquerors over them. If the curses of the broken covenant hang over us, and hell gape to receive us, yet sheltered in his wounds, no curse can smite us, no flames kindle around us. If we tremble to look upwards to an offended Judge, we are comforted when we reflect that "he hath reconciled us to God in the body of his flesh through death." If we groan over an unholy heart, he has power to mould it anew and to fill it with the christian graces. If we be called to pass through the gloomy vale of death, this Sun of righteousness can enlighten it, and cause us even there to "lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption draweth nigh." If we go into a strange and unknown world, he can there fill our souls with joys far above all our thoughts or desires. O blessed period, when will it arrive! Then, and not till then shall we be able to see the power of that love, which stormed and vanquished our obstinate hearts; which overcame our raging lusts and corruptions; which threw open the doors of heaven for our reception, and closed the gates of hell against us; which drew us up to glory through a host of furious devils and ungodly men. O let us now begin to shout those hallelujahs which will then dwell upon our tongue, and to sing, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our

sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and dominion forever."

4. Finally, to crown all these properties, this love was *painful* and *suffering*. Jesus did not content himself to display his kindness only by words or by deeds which cost him nothing. His love has stronger proofs; it is attested by the sorrows to which it induced him chearfully to submit. These sorrows were incalculable in number, and inconceivable in degree: every step that he took through life from the sordid manger to the bloody cross, was marked with misery. Poverty, pain, reproaches, slanders, these were his ordinary portion; and to consummate it all, he closes his mortal life in ignominy and pain. Let us turn aside for a moment and behold this great sight. Christians, raise your eyes to the accursed cross; behold extended upon it the eternal Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Judge of quick and dead. Why does he remain hanging upon it? By a single word he could cause the nails which fasten him, to drop, and the soldiers who guard him, to sink in the agonies of death. Ah! christians! he is retained by stronger bonds; he is secured by safer guards: the firm cords of love fasten him to the cross; the eternal purposes of mercy form that powerful guard which even his omnipotence cannot resist. Behold his livid mouth, his hands and his feet changed into streams of blood,

his whole frame torn by the scourge, the nails, and spear. View the crowd which surround this victim of love; and listen to their reproaches, their contumelies and curses. Do you shudder at considering these woes? Alas! this was but the smallest part of what the Saviour underwent. These outward tortures were joy, were extacy, compared to the agonies of his soul. Standing as the substitute of sinners he endured the wrath of God due to sin; wrath which none but he who was united to the Godhead could have sustained. So inconceivable, so infinite were the woes of his soul, as by their endurance for a few hours, to counterpoise the everlasting damnation of all the millions of the redeemed, who shall hereafter surround his throne. To all this, Jesus submitted for you. These were the powerful proofs of his love; the tender expressions of his mercy: he joyfully consented to lay down his life, that you might live eternally; to be painfully crucified, that you might be glorified.

Such is the nature of that love to which the spouse has respect, when she cries, "We will remember thy love." That it is our duty to imitate her resolution, and like her to remember this rich love, is to be shewn in the

IId. Division of our discourse.

It may seem almost unnecessary, my brethren, formally to prove this truth: It may seem that it is so firmly established by the impulse of feeling, as to render any reasoning useless. Nevertheless, as we see there are many who entirely forget the grace of the Saviour; as we all of us are too cold and infrequent in our recollections of it, it will not be improper or unprofitable, to consider for a few minutes these two ideas:

It is the duty of believers to remember the love of Christ, because

1. All those circumstances which tend to produce permanent and firm impressions upon the memory, are to be found in this love; and because

2. The remembrance and sense of this love, is the fountain whence all holy actions and good desires proceed.

1. All those circumstances which tend to produce permanent and firm impressions upon the memory, are to be found in this love.

We carefully observe and faithfully remember those things that are wonderful; those things which are calculated to excite our love; and those which are absolutely necessary for us.

We carefully observe and faithfully remember those things that are *wonderful* and beyond the ordinary course of nature. "Common events pass through the mind as common persons through the streets, without attracting particular notice;" whilst those events that are rare and astonishing, fasten upon the mind, and leave a durable impression. Now where can a greater complication of wonders be discerned, than in the love of your Redeemer? Examine it in every part, and you will find prodigies which nature cannot parallel. That the second person of the adorable Trinity, should leave his heaven and dwell with agonies, that God might be reconciled to us; that the Eternal, should become an infant of days; the Infinite, be circumscribed by a human body; the Essentially Blessed, be the man of sorrows; the Ruler of the Universe, the babe of Bethlehem: are not these sufficiently wonderful to arrest the attention and to fix the remembrance? That he who is God, should be forsaken by God; that he who is inseparably united to the source of blessedness, should be sorrowful and distressed; that by a painful and ignominious death, heaven should be unbarred, the flames of hell quenched, the world, the flesh, and the devil, vanquished—Behold a small part of the wonders which marked the love of Christ; wonders so great, that at beholding them, nature was amazed; the sun in sympathy with the source of its light, shrouded himself in darkness, and even those who were sleeping in the tomb sprang

into new life. Surely then there are wonders enough, connected with the love of the Saviour, to cause us constantly to remember it.

We easily retain and frequently meditate on all those things *which excite our love.* Do we love any object? Memory constantly presents it to us: in our more retired moments, and even amidst the bustle of the world, the object of our attachment is the theme of our meditation. Now, what is more calculated to excite our love than the love of Christ? It contains in an inconceivable degree, every thing that can engage the soul. If we compare with him any earthly objects of affection, how infinitely inferior do they appear? Ought not then the perfection, the infinitude, the utility of his love, to obtain love from us? And if we love him, we must remember him. No business can be so urgent, no sorrows so oppressive, no cares so weighty, as to make us forget a Saviour who is beloved. In the intercourse with our fellow-men our thoughts will frequently be directed to him; and when the world is shut out from our closets, he will still be present, will be the subject of our reflections, the centre towards which our souls will run.

We easily remember those things that are *beneficial* to us, and *necessary* for us. And what is there so beneficial, so necessary as the love of Christ? If it be beneficial to be delivered from the power and

punishment of sin, to be made like unto God, to be fashioned on no lower pattern than that of the all-perfect Jehovah, to enjoy a felicity infinite in degree, eternal in duration: if these things be beneficial, and if things which are beneficial deserve our remembrance, then surely we should remember the love of Christ, which procured all this for us. If it be necessary for our felicity to be shielded from the vengeance of God, to be rescued from eternal damnation, to be saved from those woes which no tongue can describe, no heart can conceive, then surely the love of Christ, which procured this exemption, should never escape from our mind. Infinitely more reasonable would it be to forget our dearest earthly friends, our highest temporal enjoyments, the things absolutely necessary for the preservation of our life, than to forget the love of our Saviour.

2. We are bound to remember the love of Christ, because the remembrance and sense of this love, is the fountain whence all holy actions and good desires proceed. It is this love which animates the christian to obedience; it is this love which, in the strong language of the apostle, "constraineth him" to labour for his master. Look over all the exercises of the christian, and you will find them as closely connected with the Saviour's love, as the nerve is with the member which it moves. Does the christian exercise *love to God?* He is enabled

to do it from a believing view of a bleeding Saviour. Faith contemplates this gift of a Father's love, and the soul is ravished into love, and inflamed with a desire of serving and enjoying him who spared not the Son of his bosom for us. Does the christian exercise *hatred for sin?* It is from the sufferings of Christ that he discerns its infinite guilt and odiousness: it is from viewing it as the murderer of his Lord that he is led to execrate and avoid it. "Shall I remain in sin," this is his language, "shall I remain in sin and crucify my Lord afresh: Shall I join with Judas to betray him, with Pilate to condemn him, with the brutal populace of Judea to outrage and insult him: Shall I retain a single darling lust, when there is not one in the whole circle of iniquities which did not combine with the others to crucify my Redeemer; not one which did not weigh him down in the garden, and stab him on the cross?" Does the christian exercise *patience and resignation* in afflictions? He is enabled to do so only by looking unto Jesus. He is "not wearied, neither faints in his mind, because he considers him who," urged by love, "endured such contradictions of sinners against himself." He would often sink, were it not for the remembrance that he has a merciful and affectionate high-priest, who has gone before him in the path of sufferings, and who having been tried like as we are, knows how to pity and relieve us when we are tried. In our weakness and distresses, the consideration of this love is a firm

prop to the soul; whilst the storm rages dreadful around us, it is an ark in which we may rest in safety. Does the christian form an act of *self-resignation* to God? He is incited to do it by the remembrance of the love of an expiring Jesus. "I am not my own, I am bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Though I am thine, Lord, by creation and preservation; yet I am peculiarly thine, by the endearing title founded on redeeming love; I therefore resign all claims to myself and give myself up unreservedly to thee." Does the christian *hope* for the heavenly inheritance? This hope is built only on the love of Christ, who having paid a ransom for our sins has entered into glory as our forerunner, to prepare there, mansions for us; and who, when the wearisome period of our pilgrimage shall have past, will send his messenger to carry us from this world to the Father. If you will in like manner review the other christian graces, you will find that they have the remembrance of the Saviour's love as their root and their principle. Hence it results then as a necessary consequence, that if christianity be any thing except a mere name, if it require any pious acts or holy exercises, the frequent remembrance of the love of Christ is essential to it.

But, my brethren, it is not every species of remembrance that is thus useful. Those who scorned, derided, crucified, and rejected him, will through-

out eternity retain the memory of the love of Christ, which they despised. This recollection will ever attend them; will fill them with anguish unutterable, will constitute the very hell of hell. The remembrance which the spouse in the text resolves to exercise, is not such a mere historical, far less such a distressing memory; but it is a remembrance accompanied by gratitude in the heart, productive of the praises of the lips, and manifested by the obedience of the life. Let us resume these ideas, they constitute the

III. Last division of our discourse.

Our remembrance must be accompanied with gratitude in the heart. To have some loose, faint recollections of the love of Christ floating in the mind; or even to discourse most profoundly upon it, while the affections remain unmoved, is not to perform an acceptable service, but to outrage and insult the Saviour. It is base and odious to suffer the amazing kindness of Jesus to escape our minds; but to meditate on his grace, on the benefits procured by it, on the price they cost him, and yet to remain unthankful, is conduct worthy only of a fiend. Oh! what warm emotions should fire our souls, when we remember but a small part of the effects produced by the love of Christ. Man was guilty, exposed to all the vengeance of an Almighty God: he was destitute of all means to preserve himself from eternal death, subject not only to the terrors of

conscience, that bosom hell, but to the strokes of infinite and inflexible justice. The creatures were his enemies, the Creator was his judge, his own heart a witness against him; there was no other limit to his misery but eternity: there remained to him no hope of succour or deliverance. Jesus flies to his aid; he not only delivers him from all his miseries; he procures for him an eternal felicity: and he obtains this deliverance by miseries far more excruciating, than mortals can conceive: O my soul, canst thou remember all this without feeling and gratitude? Does not this astonishing mercy require from thee extacies of affection? Why then art thou so cold and insensible? Does God require too much of thee, when he demands a thankful remembrance? This duty is not painful; this duty is the source of the highest joy: dost thou fly from pleasure, my soul? The reception of the benefits of thy God affords satisfaction, but the indulgence of gratitude for them produces a much higher felicity. Then let thy transports and thy rapture testify that thou feelest the value of a Saviour's love. Go, carry thy gratitude to the throne of God. But, eternal Source of love and of grace, what shall I say? I feel thy benefits, but I cannot express them. O let my heart ever burn with gratitude for them: O let it never be affected by other enjoyments.

2. If this remembrance be thus accompanied by gratitude in the heart, it will manifest itself by the

praises of the lips; it will shine in our discourse. A man who is truly affected with the love of Jesus, cannot content himself to think in secret of this love, and neglect to declare to others, the sentiments with which his soul is inflamed: "From the abundance of his heart, his mouth will speak." Gratitude, which loosed the tongue of Zechariah, at the birth of John the Baptist, will loose his tongue also, and cause him to publish the mercies and perfections of his Lord. He loves to declare in the temple and in the world, in worship and in conversation, the blessings he has received from his compassionate Redeemer: he is desirous to employ, in the praise of the Saviour, the best part of the breath which he has received from his goodness. Like David, he says, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth, from the great congregation." The believer, far from being ashamed to confess his obligations, invites the heavens and the earth, the different classes of men, all creatures, even those that are inanimate, to join in the concert which he wishes to form to the glory of the God whom he adores, and the Saviour whom he loves. After all his efforts, he is afflicted only because he expresses so feebly all the gratitude and affection which he feels for his Redeemer. Ah! my brethren! what cause of self-reproach have we on this point; where are the persons amongst us, whose words and discourses

prove that the love of the Saviour has made a proper impression upon their hearts? How many millions of times have we indulged in vain, useless, sinful conversations, rather than speak of our Saviour? Think you that that slanderous, that profane, that indecent, that frivolous language, which is often observed in your interviews, affords a proof that you have been properly affected by the love of Christ?

3. Finally, to these emotions of the heart, to these words of the mouth, must be added the actions of the life, if we would manifest a true remembrance of the love of the Saviour. In the language of the scripture, to forget God and to sin against him, are used as synonimous expressions. Unaccompanied by active obedience, all glows of the affections, all professions of the lips, will be a hollow and hypocritical sacrifice, which God will reject with abhorrence. Let us then be careful that whilst with the angels our hearts swell with gratitude, and our tongues cry, "Holy is the Lord of hosts:" Let us be careful also, like them to fly to execute the orders of God. No, my dear brethren, it is a foolish contradiction to say that we gratefully remember the love of Christ, whilst at the same time by our iniquities we crucify him afresh, and endeavour as far as possible to frustrate the effects of this love. Purity of life is the gratitude which God demands. Beware then all those of you who suppose that you imitate the conduct of the spouse in the text, be-

cause you have certain glows of affection when you remember the sufferings of Jesus, and because you talk much of this Redeemer, whilst at the same time your life is marked by no holiness or charity. The time is coming in which you will find to your eternal confusion, that "not those who cry, Lord, Lord, but those who do his commandments," are the persons that remember the Saviour's love, and will be admitted to his kingdom.

Happy will it be for us, my brethren, if we all thus attest our remembrance of the Saviour, by the sentiments of the heart, the words of the mouth, and the actions of the life. He will continually afford us new blessings; he will be our light and our salvation on earth, and our support in the hour of death: and when his grace shall have admitted us to a blissful eternity, we will still, but with infinitely warmer gratitude, with infinitely more lively sentiments of joy and love, celebrate our Saviour. And when our bodies, waked from the slumber of the grave, shall be re-united to our happy souls, we will shout, "Saviour, we no more can forget thy love; each moment as it passes, will recal it to us: the full ocean of blessedness which pours upon our souls, will ever remind us of thy cross; and throughout the ages of eternity, each breath that we draw, shall be an aspiration of praise to thee."

SERMON XV.

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.

PSALM xxiii.

"*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*"

IN the season of affliction and bereavement, we feel most sensibly the effects of the divine compassion. When we are sinking under the pressure of sorrow, when those earthly objects which had afforded us pleasure are torn from us or embittered to us, when the world presents nothing to us but a dreary waste incapable of conferring on us any enjoyment; then it is that God is nearest to us, and that his comforts are most sensibly felt by us. In a single month of affliction and distress, we experience

more of the supporting and consolatory influences of the Blessed Spirit, than we do in whole years of prosperity. And when God, after his benevolent purposes in afflicting us are accomplished, interposes in our favour and rescues us from misery, our hearts glow with much warmer gratitude than if we had always remained in felicity. It is for this reason that the most tender and affecting psalms of David were written, when he had just been delivered from some of those calamities of which his life was full. At such periods, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, he joyfully celebrated the mercies of God, acknowledged him as the only source of true felicity; and acquiring a firm trust in him from the past experience of his mercy, looked forward with confidence to the future, assured that this God who had already conferred so many blessings upon him, would never forsake him.

You perceive the truth of these observations in this delightful psalm, which is now to occupy your attention, and which was probably written at that period of his life when the rebellion of his son Absalom, obliged the royal psalmist to retire from Jerusalem and flee to the borders of Lebanon. Dispirited and hopeless, wounded by the ingratitude of his son, forsaken by his friends and driven to an uncultivated region, he was overwhelmed with sorrow, and trembled lest himself and the small remains of

his army should perish with famine; but the event was more happy: his veteran troops, acquainted with his virtues and personally attached to him, flocked to his standard, and the good and opulent citizens afforded him liberal support.

Full of gratitude to that God who had thus unexpectedly led his subjects to espouse his cause and supply his necessities, he exclaims, "*The Lord is my shepherd.*" The sheep, a timid, defenceless animal, unable to foresee danger and incapable of resisting an assault, indebted for its preservation to the vigilance of the shepherd, was a fit emblem of David left without support, until the good providence of God interposed in his behalf. And on the other hand, the care of a tender shepherd beautifully shadowed forth the active beneficence of God towards his afflicted servant.

There were several circumstances that would naturally induce David to represent the Lord under this image. It was an image familiar to the Jewish people who were greatly employed in pastoral occupations; the trembling sheep and the attentive shepherd were immediately before the eyes of David on the mountains of Lebanon, at the time that he wrote this hymn of praise; and he knew the feelings of a shepherd, having himself in his youth watched over the flock, and been so solicitous for its preservation as to expose his own life in its behalf.

After he had considered God in this character he could not but conclude, "*I shall not want.*" With so wise and powerful a protector I know that I shall enjoy every thing necessary for my support or defence. Unlike those earthly shepherds, who, notwithstanding the warmth of their affection for their flock, are often constrained to leave it in want through poverty, through weakness, through the sterility of their fields, or the rigour of the season; unlike these earthly shepherds, he to whom I belong is so rich and powerful, that I shall need nothing. He is the Master and Disposer of the universe and all that it contains, and his infinite love is sustained by infinite power. There is not a want of my heart which he cannot supply, not an inquietude of my spirit which he cannot relieve, not a desire of my soul which he cannot gratify. "*The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.*"

Lebanon, on the borders of which as we have already said David now was, is in part rough, craggy, and barren; and from its top, at certain seasons, cataracts of melted snow descend, which render the water turbid and insalubrious. The psalmist contrasts the provision which the earthly shepherds who dwelt there made for their flocks, with that which his divine Shepherd made for him. "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.*" Bounteously providing for

me, he shelters me from the heat of the noon-day sun, where the pastures are, not like those before my eyes, craggy and barren, but green and fertile; and at night he leadeth me, not to troubled and impetuous torrents, but to pure and quiet waters that gently flow.

The paths conducting to the top of the mountain were devious and crooked, and in traversing them the sheep were exposed to many dangers, and were frequently bewildered and lost. But the Shepherd of Israel follows David in his wanderings; and causes him to walk in plain and secure paths: "*He restoreth*, or bringeth back *my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.*" When I wander from him the only preserver of my felicity, the only source of my safety, he doth not abandon me to misery and destruction; he tenderly seeks me, he snatches me from danger, he plucks me from the edge of the precipice to which I had thoughtlessly strayed, he saves me from the ferocious beasts of the desart that were ready to devour me, and compassionately guides me in those pleasant paths where no dangers need appal me, where no foes can injure me, where proceeding under his eye and secured by his care, I shall advance forward in safety and felicity. And this he does not through any interested motives, not for the sake of any profit that can be derived from me, or from any merit in me, but

from the impulse of his mercy, "*for his name's sake.*"

In the mountain of Lebanon, as in almost all the mountains of Judæa, there are numberless dusky holes and caverns; some of which are natural and others artificial. Many of them were at different times devoted to the uses of war; of this we have several instances in the life of David himself, who more than once employed them as places of refuge and as strong fortresses.* Besides this use, these caves were ordinarily chosen by the Jews as the repositories of the dead; and as from their construction they were peculiarly fitted for it, so they in reality became the haunts of the most ferocious animals, and the retirements of the most determined robbers. Nothing could be more terrifying than a valley skirted by such caverns; a person in passing through it would be perpetually pained by the recollection of the blood which once had stained it, by the sight of the mouldering carcases corrupting around it, and by the apprehension lest some ferocious beast or bloody assassin was lying in wait jus-

* Josephus affords us several confirmations of the same fact. I will quote a single example from him, in which he describes their construction. Speaking of those formed by Hyrcanus in Perœa, he says: "In the rock that was against the mountain he formed caves of many furlongs long. He made their mouths so narrow, that one only could enter at a time, and this he did for security, and to avoid danger if he should be besieged by his brethren."

ready to deprive him of life. Such a place David by a strong and elegant figure, calls "*a valley of the shadow of death;*" that is, a valley as gloomy and dismal as though death visibly hovered over it and obscured it with his shadow large and horrible, totally obstructing the few gleams of light which it might otherwise enjoy. In it nothing but the extreme and unremitted vigilance of the shepherd could preserve his defenceless flock: yet such was the confidence of David in the guardianship of his divine Shepherd that even in it he was free from apprehensions and alarms, since the crook of his heavenly protector could guide him amidst all its darkness, and his rod defend him from all its perils. "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*"

"*I will fear no evil.*" Though I behold before me every thing that can affright the heart, every thing most distressing to nature; and though I feel myself frail and impotent, yet my soul is calm, and instead of trembling with apprehension firmly leans upon its God. "*Thou art with me:*" thou, whose power is unlimited, whose compassion is unspeakable. Thou beholdest all my perils; thou pitiest me amidst my dangers and infirmities, and thou art able to deliver me. Often have I experienced thy care and defence in years that are past.

Often has thy flock in the most disastrous circumstances been guarded and comforted by thee. Why then should I tremble since my faith beholds thee present? "*Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.*" Amidst all the darkness and perplexity of my path, thy staff shall direct my steps; thy rod shall drive away the enemies that threaten me. Yes, my Shepherd, in those desolate moments when the kindest human friend can bestow only an ineffectual pity and shed useless tears, thou canst defend and sustain me, and fill my soul with consolations unspeakable.

The Psalmist here leaves his figurative language, and celebrates the goodness of God which has liberally supplied his wants to the confusion of his malignant foes. "*Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil:*" This was a ceremony used among the Jews previous to their participation of a festival: "*my cup runneth over.*"

In the conclusion of the psalm, he declares his full confidence in the future protection and favour of God, and his assured trust that he would be restored to Jerusalem, where he might quietly worship in the holy temple. "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*"

Having thus illustrated at some length the occasion and import of this psalm, let us now enquire more in detail in what respects God may be compared to a tender and careful shepherd. It is the duty of a shepherd, to *guide* his flock; to *supply* their wants; to *heal* them when they are languishing and sick; to *defend* them from danger—And all this is abundantly done by the Lord towards his people.

I. It is part of the pastoral office to *guide* the flock, to prevent it from wandering, or to lead it back in safety when it has strayed. And say, believers, does not our God fully discharge this tender office? In order that we might be safely guided through this thorny maze, he has given us his holy word, a more sure director than the rod of the shepherd; a director which in every circumstance of perplexity and doubt, cries to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it." He has given us his Son to go before us, and mark out the road which we must tread, in order that we may at last eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of that river of delights which flows at God's right hand. He has given us his blessed Spirit, not only to induce us to follow the directions of this scripture and the example of this Saviour, but also that he himself may "lead us in the paths of righteousness." What flock, then, is guided with greater care than the flock of the Lord? Yet, notwithstanding this, they sometimes

wander from the narrow path, and stray into the perilous wilderness: in these instances their Shepherd forsakes them not; he flies to "seek and to save that which is lost;" he hastens to restore the straying soul, and to bring it back to his secure fold. Can we not testify to this, my brethren? When we were wandering and lost, did not our careful Shepherd seek us with solicitude, draw us from the very brink of the precipice on which we were thoughtlessly straying, bring us back rejoicing, and so tenderly guide us that we have been kept in safety to the present day? Can we not testify that God has fulfilled to us that gracious promise: "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out; as a shepherd seeketh out his flock, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day: I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away." (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12, 16.)

II. It is a part of the pastoral office to *supply* the flock with all things necessary for sustenance and convenience; and God has graciously promised respecting his people, (Ezek. xxxiv. 14.) "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there they shall be in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel." Believers, God has more than fulfilled this promise; he

not only supplies his flock with what is necessary for its sustenance, but seems to delight in making it taste of the profusion of his bounty; whilst here he feeds us not with the husks of earth, but with the hidden manna of heaven; he gives us to taste of those rich blessings which flow from a sense of his favour, from the communications of his love, from the influences of the Holy Ghost, from a foretaste of the joys of heaven. He gives now to every member of his flock that portion which is best for him, and leads them one by one into those blissful regions where every want shall be supplied, every desire satisfied; where God himself, with all his glories and with all his mercies, shall be the rich and never-failing portion of their soul. Ah! where is the earthly shepherd who is either disposed or able, so abundantly to satisfy the necessities of his flock? No; there is none but God who can bestow on hungry and famished souls those rich provisions which will fully satisfy them here below, and fit them for that state, where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," since their divine Shepherd "shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters." (Rev. vii. 16.)

III. It is part of the pastoral office to *support* the flock when weak, and to *heal* it when sick. And is not this too done by our God? In innumerable parts of the scripture, he represents himself engaged in this benevolent employment: in the language of

Ezekiel, "he bindeth up that which is broken, he strengtheneth that which is sick." In the still more tender expressions of Isaiah, he "gathereth the lambs in his arms, carrieth them in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." Christians, how often have you experienced the truth of these declarations—When you were bowed down with a sense of your guilt, and went on your course sorrowful and sighing, who was it that bound up your broken heart, that gave you comfort and joy? Who but the Shepherd of Israel saying unto you, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." When you first entered upon the christian course, advancing with trembling steps, fearing that you might be overcome by the power of temptation, feeling yourself to be feeble and helpless as the lamb; who was it that supported your tottering steps, that fanned the "smoking flax" into a flame, that had compassion on your weakness? Who but the Lord our Shepherd? In those gloomy seasons when you have had fearful apprehensions of futurity, have lost the cheering light of God's countenance, and questioned the sincerity of your love to him; who was it that in this desolate condition restored joy and gladness to your soul? It was your divine Shepherd who shed upon you the beams of his love, and whispered to your troubled heart: "Fear not, thou of little faith; I am thy God." In periods of outward sorrow, of sickness, of poverty, of contempt, what is it that has supported you; what but the commu-

nications of heavenly grace, the consolations of the blessed Spirit, a tender feeling of the love of God towards you. "Truly then God is good to Israel; he healeth all his sicknesses, he redeemeth his life from destruction;" "he strengtheneth him upon the bed of languishing, he maketh all his bed in sickness:" "He healeth him when broken in heart and bindeth up his wounds."

IV. Finally, it is part of the pastoral office to *defend* the flock from dangers. And where is the protector to be compared with the Lord? Review your lives, believers, and you will immediately behold a thousand instances in which he has interposed in your behalf, and rescued you from the most imminent perils. But were your faculties so enlarged as to contemplate the whole plan of his providence towards you, what a crowd of deliverances would you behold; in each moment of your life you would see some instance of his *defending* goodness. At this period you would see him so arranging events in his providence, that a violent temptation might be checked just at the moment your piety was wavering; at that, presenting to you some circumstance that would tend to rekindle your virtue. Here, you would contemplate him encompassing you as with a shield, to enable you to resist an assault of Satan; there, warding off from you some calamity which you were not able to endure. *Everywhere* you would behold him so managing all your

concerns, that nothing should befal you which would not work together for your greatest good. O who is a defender like to our God? Who has equal *power* with him, or equal *love* to impel that power to action?

Do you wish to see an illustrious example of his willingness to defend you in every situation? View for a moment that miracle of goodness which astonished heaven and earth. The ungrateful flock of the Lord, rejecting his guidance, rebelling against his authority, wandering from his paths, was ready to become the prey of satan and the subjects of eternal sorrow: but in this situation, when none else could defend them, they found a defender in their injured Shepherd; he procured a deliverer in the Son of his love; and although they had advanced so near to the abyss that they could not be saved, unless Jesus threw himself into it, he, urged by his compassion, hesitated not to perform this divine act of mercy. After viewing this deliverance, shall we fear that God will not interpose for our defence, when we are threatened by danger? Oh no! confident of his guardian care, we will securely sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"

Should we not naturally suppose, my brethren, that all mankind would imitate the example of Da-

vid, and seek in the kindness and protection of the most Merciful, a support in their afflictions, a refuge in their distresses? But, alas! we need only look around us to behold thousands of the feeble and unhappy children of men, who are still "as sheep going astray;" who still refuse to "return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls:" (1 Pet. ii. 25. Poor sinners! since you will not attach yourselves to his flock, "you shall want;" want all the consolations of his grace, all the joys of his Spirit, all the splendours of his heaven. Since you choose to trace the downward road to hell, rather than permit him to "lead you in the paths of righteousness," you shall not have him as a supporter when you "walk through the valley of the shadow of death." In that awful moment, whilst the darkness of the tomb gathers round you, the remembrance of your past wanderings from God and from happiness, shall fill you with agony; and in anticipating the future you can have no hope of "dwelling in the house," the heavenly temple "of the Lord forever." And where will you find consolation, when after your final groan, your soul shall fall, naked and defenceless, red with unexpiated guilt, and destitute of the heavenly Shepherd's protection, before the tribunal of the thrice holy God. Oh! in time avoid this fearful doom; let the happiness which David experiences from the care and tenderness of the Shepherd of Israel, induce you to leave the paths of sin, and submit yourselves to him; he affectionately

calls you; he assures you that he is willing to receive you, to guard you, to fill your hearts with joy. Resist no longer his tender invitations.

Flock of God, ever *be contented* with your lot in life; remember that your Shepherd, who tenderly loves you, orders all things and all events so as to promote your greatest good. To murmur at any of his dispensations, is criminally to rebel against him and presumptuously to doubt of his power or affection. Since you "are the sheep of his pasture," submit implicitly to his tender guidance.

Live in constant *dependence* upon him. We, his feeble flock, weak, liable to err, incapable of defending ourselves, can no where find safety but in his protection. Like David, build your hopes of support in life and death, for time and eternity, not on yourselves, but on God; on his love, his faithfulness, the endearing relations he sustains towards you.

Confide in your Shepherd. In all your afflictions recollect that his presence is with you, that his cloud covers you, that his pillar of fire goes before you, that his rod and his staff can comfort you. With the psalmist conclude, that as he bears this tender office, and has hitherto protected and guarded you, so he will continue his loving-kindness towards you, and cause his "goodness and mercy to

follow you all the days of your life." Those fears and apprehensions for the future, which you sometimes feel, shew but little faith, but little reliance upon the pastoral care of the Lord. "Why then are ye cast down, O our souls, and why are ye disquieted within us? Trust in God." Trust in him, christans; he will safely conduct you through this vale of tears, render you triumphant in death, and then receive you to that better world where your Shepherd "shall feed you and shall lead you unto living fountains of waters;" where he "shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

SERMON XVI.

ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

GENESIS xxii. 1, 2.

"*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*"

MY brethren, the event related in the text is no less affecting and instructive than astonishing. I am not surprised that the worshippers of Moloch should offer their children in sacrifice to this pretended Deity; these worshippers were superstitious; this God was cruel. But that our merciful Father, who willeth only the happiness of his creatures, should impose such a trial as this upon a tender parent; that this parent should so overcome the strongest feelings of nature as to comply with it without murmuring; these are events which fill me with admiration, till I recollect on the one hand the wise ends which God hereby accomplished, and on the other the power and strength of that faith which upheld the

pious Abraham. But cold admiration is not the only sentiment which this history should excite; it is calculated to awaken the tenderest feeelings and to afford us the most useful lessons. I propose, that this purpose may be answered to review the circumstances of this event, and then to enquire what practical instructions may be derived from it.

God of Abraham and of Isaac, eternal Father of that Saviour whom Isaac weakly prefigured, let our meditations on this subject tend to increase our holiness, and to inspire us with that faith, which will make us victorious not only over the world and sin, but also over the improper indulgence of those powerful feelings of nature, which become criminal only through excess.

It is pleasing and useful to contemplate pious men, supported in the midst of difficulties and distresses by the consolations of religion, and the exercise of faith. From such examples we are taught more compendiously and forcibly than we could be by precept, the value of piety, the duty of submission to the will of God. Such instructions we may derive from this event in the life of the patriarch Abraham.

He had now arrived to an advanced old age, and living in strict communion with his God, hoped to descend in peace to the house of silence. He was sur-

rounded by temporal enjoyments; he had received from the Almighty that noblest and most endearing of titles, the "friend of God;" he saw his memory about to be perpetuated, in a son dearly and deservedly beloved, a son given him by miracle, a son in whose seed the nations were to be blessed. But, human hopes, how fallacious are you! Earthly bliss, how easily art thou destroyed! God will not suffer his children to remain in this world without afflictions and sorrows, lest they should forget that this is not their abiding city, lest their desires after the heavenly inheritance should be cooled or extinguished. It was thus that he acted towards Abraham: "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham." The word, *to tempt*, is generally used in an ill sense, signifying *to incite to sin;* in this sense, God cannot as St. James asserts, tempt any man: when he is said to tempt his children, the meaning is, that he so orders events in his providence that their piety may be strongly attacked, and its warmth and sincerity attested by a victory over dangerous assaults. It would be better perhaps to translate the original word, *did try;* which is its primitive signification. God then "did try Abraham, and said unto him Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am." We are ignorant in what precise manner the Lord revealed himself to this his faithful servant; he did it however in such a manner as to assure Abraham that he was

addressed by God. It was a voice that was familiar and dear to the patriarch; he had often been blest by such intimate intercourse with his Master; the most precious promises had in this manner been made to him; he listens to it now with eagerness, expecting perhaps new favours. What is it then which the Lord announces? "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest." Ah! when Abraham heard only these words, his attention became more fixed; he supposed doubtless that this dear object of his affection was about to partake of new mercies from his Lord, was to receive either new promises or to obtain the confirmation of those that had already been made to him. What a stroke was this order which follows! Take this son so dearly, so justly beloved by thee, "and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of." Holy Abraham! what a trial was this; how great was that faith which could triumph over it!

It would have been much, had the pious patriarch merely been told that Isaac must die—it had been much to relinquish all those fond hopes which he had cherished, and which he had believed that he was authorized to entertain from the promises of God. But then his grief would be mitigated by watching around the sick bed of his son, by assuag-

ing his pains, and performing for him the last offices of affection: but this feeble consolation must be denied him, for Isaac must be slain, must die by violence. Even then it might be possible that Abraham might remove at a distance from this bloody spectacle, and avoid beholding the last agonies of his son: No—this alleviation is not granted to him; he must not only behold Isaac struggling with the pangs of death, but must himself inflict the mortal blow; the hand that, it would seem, should only be employed in his defence, must be dyed with his gushing blood; the final groans of an only son must vibrate through the ears of a parent who has wounded him; and after he is cold and senseless, this parent must light the wood on which he is extended, and behold the body of his offspring slowly reduced to ashes. Ah! holy patriarch, hadst thou been less devoted to God, what various pleas mightest thou have urged to excuse thy compliance with this painful duty. But, my brethren, Abraham was not of the number of those persons who suppose that they may violate the laws of God, because they cannot perfectly comprehend the reasons of them: as soon as he knew the will of God clearly and explicitly, he prepared not to argue, but to obey it without hesitancy or delay. He stifles the feelings of nature; he suppresses the suggestions of doubt; he goes to perform the command of his Lord, and says with resignation—Not my will, but thine be done. "And Abraham rose up early in the morn-

ing, and saddled his ass," (for this, in the earlier ages of the world, was the manner in which persons of the greatest distinction travelled) " and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up and went towards the place of which God had told him: and on the third day he lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off." What sorrows must have wrung the heart of the parent during these three mournful days. Whilst Isaac was addressing him with filial affection and tenderness, or speaking of the wonders that had been wrought in their behalf by the God whom they worshipped, what keen regrets must have agitated the afflicted father in reflecting that in so short a period this affectionate child must be sunk in the grave by his arm. Nevertheless he still prosecutes his journey with a determined soul. His trial was indeed great; but he was not crushed by it, for God who inflicted it upon him, always wisely proportions the trials of his children to the strength of grace which they have received. Having arrived at the foot of the mount, he left the servants there, " and took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father: And he said, here am I, my son. And he said, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering." What force is there in this tender ad-

dress and this simple question of Isaac—"The heart alone can comment upon these words." "And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together."

Having ascended the mount and built the altar, Abraham "bound Isaac his son and laid him upon it." It will be recollected that Isaac had now arrived to years of discretion, and was probably about the age of thirty-three; he must of consequence have been bound by his own consent. Nothing then could be more affecting than their interview when, having arrived to the appointed place, Abraham informed his son of the orders he had received from God; and forgetting the Father in the believer, urges him unreservedly to submit to the will of the All-Merciful. Isaac yields, submits without a murmur, and prepares to lay down his life with calmness at the command of God.

The final embrace has been given and received; the solemn and affecting farewell has been mutually pronounced; Isaac is extended upon the wood; the arm of Abraham is raised to strike the fatal blow; in another moment the knife will be dyed with the blood of his son. O christians, it is in such seasons of gloom and perplexity when all hope is relinquished, that our God appears for our succour. God by his angel called to him from heaven,

and said, "Abraham, Abraham! lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me." A victim is provided in the place of Isaac; God renews his covenant with the faithful parent and confirms it by an oath; and Abraham returns home rejoicing in these new displays of divine goodness. It is always thus, my brethren; when an obedience to the commands of God seems to lead us to misery and death, we find peace and joy: whilst in following the world which promises us prosperity and delight, we find death, eternal death.

This interesting history affords us,

I. An instruction for Christians.

II. A reproof to sinners.

III. A consolation for mourners.

I. Christians, you are here taught some of the characteristics of that obedience which you owe to God. It should, like that of Abraham, be *universal, willing, prompt.*

1. Our obedience to the commands of God must be *universal.* Our dearest gratifications, must be

relinquished, the severest pains endured rather than violate his orders. Having learned the will of our Lord, we must prepare to perform it, even though our hearts are to be torn by the sacrifice of an Isaac. How many are there, my brethren, who forget this great characteristic of christian obedience: they are willing to obey God to a certain point, but beyond this they say to him with the guests of the parable, "I pray thee have me excused." They will be willing, for instance, to acknowledge the truth of religion and to contend warmly against its enemies; but to practice it sincerely, this is making too great a sacrifice. They will be willing to abstain from gross crimes, but not to perform painful duties: they will be willing to attend to all the external rites of religion, but to demand from them vital heartfelt piety, is to demand too much: they will be willing to comply with all fashionable virtues, but not with those that are contemned by the world. There are innumerable other such examples of partial obedience which will immediately occur to you. How different a lesson are we taught by Abraham: he is commanded to perform an action in comparison with which he would with joy lay down his own life; an action which seemed contrary to the character of God, the spirit of his religion, and the promises he had made. Yet God commands—all scruples must be silenced—Isaac must be sacrificed. God, my brethren, does not command us now to offer up our children to him, but if you have not the same sen-

timents which induced Abraham to comply with the divine orders, if you resolve that if you were placed in his situation, you would act differently, you are no christians; for there is no principle more plainly or unequivocally asserted in the word of God than this—that a deliberate refusal to obey any one command of the Lord, is a proof that our obedience in other respects did not spring from a regard for his authority, but from motives purely human. "Whosoever," saith St. James, "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend" deliberately and resolvedly "in one point, he is guilty of all." Let your obedience then be universal; extending to those things most painful, as well as to those most pleasing to nature. Be as ready to sacrifice as to cherish an Isaac, if God should command you.

2. Christian obedience must be *willing*. All murmurs must be silenced, and the heart acquiesce in the duty. This is a second characteristic of christian obedience taught us by Abraham. It is not sufficient to perform those actions which God bids us, if we do them with repinings and regrets; if like slaves under the rod of a tyrant we are driven involuntarily to do what we hate: these are not the servants whom God approves; he rewards those only who love him; and it is one of the first effects of love to him, to make us delight to perform his commands. Behold Abraham once more: he received an order at which nature shuddered; yet

though he feels as a father, he submits as a believer. The severity of the trial does not excite any improper sentiment against God; it is a bitter cup, but still it is a cup given by the hand of the Father, and he prepares to drink it with willingness and resignation. The succours of grace assuage the pains of nature, and he says with a composed, a resigned, a willing soul, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

3. Christian obedience must be *prompt*. All unnecessary delay must be carefully avoided: the moment God speaks, the injunction must be complied with. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" behold this exemplified in Abraham. God had commanded him to sacrifice his son—he does not delay the execution of this order till he might in the course of time become more reconciled to a separation that was rendered doubly poignant, by being unexpected. For "Abraham rose up early in the morning," and prepared immediately to execute the painful duty assigned to him. Imitate his example, christians; when the Lord calls, do not say with those who neglected the gracious invitations of the Saviour, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father:" your first duty is to obey the voice of your master.

II. Whilst christians are thus instructed, sinners are reproved by this subject. The God who spake

to Abraham, speaks to you also. He does not, it is true, address you immediately; but through his word, his spirit, his ministers, and his providence: yet his address is not on this account less real or less binding. He said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him as a burnt-offering unto me." He cries to you, "Sinners, seize those iniquities which you love; your sensuality, your worldly-mindedness, your injustice, your revenge, your intemperance, your unholy passions and affections; slay them that they may not lead you to destruction; let the fire of divine love penetrate to your hearts, and consume them entirely," that they may be a burnt-offering to the Lord. Ah! my brethren, Abraham had a harder trial than this, yet he did not hesitate to perform it; and will you, who live under the clear light of the gospel, which shews you obligations to obey God, which Abraham knew but faintly; will you from whom nothing is demanded half so rending to the heart as what was demanded from him—tell me, will you fall so far beneath this father of the faithful in obeying the voice of God? Imitate this holy patriarch, or he will rise up against you in the day of judgment.

III. And you, mourners, who are weeping over the tombs of those who were dear to you, come and behold in Abraham a model and consoler. Were you more attached to the parent, the child, the friend

whom you lament, than this tenderest of fathers was to this most beloved of sons: yet he resigns him to death with calmness and submission. Do you wish to know what was that powerful principle which enabled him thus to bear so afflictive a separation? You are taught it by the apostle Paul: "*By faith* Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac." Believing in the power and wisdom of God, he knew that all things were wisely ordered by him, and that the highest duty, as well as the greatest wisdom of feeble, short-sighted man, is to submit unreservedly to omniscience, guided by fatherly affection. Faith taught him that the glories of the unseen world were reserved for his pious son; and that, however dark and perplexing the schemes of providence may appear, "it shall always be well with the righteous." Cultivate this faith in the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God—it will be a prop to your soul when all earthly supports shall fail; and by it you will be enabled to offer up your friends to God, when he calls for them, with resignation and calmness.

But, my brethren, all these lessons are taught us with greater force, when we contemplate him of whom Isaac was so illustrious a type. Will you learn the characteristics of obedience, the necessity of renouncing sin, the duty of submitting without murmuring to the most afflictive providences?—Leave Moriah and ascend to Calvary. Behold there

the true Isaac ascending the hill, bearing the wood on which he is to be offered as a sacrifice: behold him extended upon it: He, like the son of Abraham, is not constrained to lay down his life; the offering is voluntary. The hand of his Father is raised to smite him—Ah! no voice is now heard which restrains the stroke; no other victim is provided by God—the life blood of Jesus gushes from his wounds. Whilst we see this Saviour thus despoiling himself of his glory, submitting to every indignity and pain, and at last laying down his life for our sakes—shall we not obey him *without reserve or limitation?* shall we esteem any duty too painful, any trial too severe to be undergone for the sake of this Saviour? Shall not our obedience to him be *willing?* he is too dear a friend, he has done too much for us to permit that we should serve him heartlessly and grudgingly. Shall not our obedience to him be *prompt?* He delayed not to work our deliverance; when he was for us to be baptized with the baptism of suffering and death, he was straitened and afflicted until it was accomplished; he hasted to consummate his mediatorial office by the oblation of himself. And shall we then, who call ourselves his disciples, delay and procrastinate the performance of our duties?

Sinners, turn to this same object, that you may learn to sacrifice all your criminal passions and pursuits to God calling upon you to destroy them.

Whilst you see this divine victim pierced by your sins, murdered by your transgressions—will you not in return immolate these sins and transgressions? Whilst you see Jesus "bruised and put to grief for your iniquities"—smitten by the hand of a Father, whilst he stands as your pledge and surety; will you not bring these iniquities to the foot of the cross, and there slay them before him?

Finally, do you, mourners, direct your eyes to this sad spectacle; and, seeing the sorrows of him of whom Isaac was so feeble a type, learn to bear your griefs with resignation and composure: What! will you repine at your small portion of sorrows, when your master has undergone so much keener agonies? What! when God gave the son of his love to such inconceivable tortures for our sakes, shall we be unwilling that he should afflict us in so much smaller a degree, and with the design that we "may be made partakers of his holiness?" Oh, no! let the tears, the anguish, and the blood of Jesus, suspend our sighs and silence our murmurs; let us even rejoice that he calls us to a fellowship in his sufferings, in order that we may be fitted for his glory, and be prepared "to sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our heavenly Father."

SERMON XVII.

THE SINNER HIS OWN DESTROYER.

HOSEA xiii. 9.

"*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.*"

MY brethren, if we beheld a person murdered and weltering in his blood, or the smoking ruins of a city which had been fired by incendiaries, there is not one of us who would not be desirous to discover the cause of these miseries; there is not one of us who would not immediately and anxiously enquire, who were the authors of these horrid deeds? Thus affected by temporal distresses, shall we look with indifference upon eternal agonies! Prying with solicitude into the nature and origin of smaller evils, shall we content ourselves with casting a cool and rapid glance on the tortures of the accursed, and neglect to enquire into the origin and source of these tortures? Let us not act thus contradictorily: let us strip off the covering from the infernal pit, and looking down into it, behold those "chains of darkness;" that "smoke which ascendeth forever," that "fire which never is quenched," that "worm which never dieth:" Let us listen to

those groans and lamentations which re-echo round this dreary abode; and whilst with faithfulness and trembling we consider these agonies, let us reverently cry to the Fountain of light, who is it holy God, that hath dug this abyss? Who is it that hath pushed these sufferers into it? Who, who is the author of this unutterable woe? To this question the God of truth replies in our text: "Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself:" Sinners, you are the authors of your own perdition: you have forged those chains which bind you; you have kindled those flames which consume you; you have pulled down that vengeance which fills you with horror and sinks you in despair.

This is the decision of that God "who cannot be deceived," and who cannot deceive. When he speaks thus clearly, surely it is the duty of sinners to acknowledge his truth and believe his declarations. But do they make this acknowledgement? Do they exercise this belief? No: in their hearts and sometimes with their lips, they dare blasphemously to cast the blame of their destruction from themselves upon God. Sometimes it is his decree which constrains them; sometimes it is the withholding of his grace which excuses them; sometimes it is the force of temptation and their own inability, which exempts them from blame.

Since by such pleas the sinner quiets the clamours of his conscience and dishonours the God whom we love, let us strive to strip him of these pleas and vindicate the cause of God. These objects will be attained by a careful meditation on the following proposition, which naturally flows from the text:

The destruction of impenitent sinners is procured by themselves; or, in other words, *the accursed must lay all the blame of their perdition, not on God but on themselves.*

Two things are requisite for the illustration of this proposition:

I. We must establish its truth by arguments.

II. We must answer the objections that are made against it.

You have before you the whole division of the ensuing discourse.

I. That the destruction of the impenitent is procured by themselves, will be evident to you if you attend to the *attributes*, the *word*, the *conduct of God*, the *sentiments of believers*, and the *confessions of sinners*.

1. The attributes of God. Every perfection of Deity must be prostrated and trampled upon, before the blame can be cast upon him for the perdition of sinners. Where would be his *justice*, if the miserable victims of despair could address him as they sunk into the flames, and say with truth—Thou art the procuring cause of that woe which I am about to suffer—it is owing to thee alone that I have not escaped this torment? Where would be his tender *mercy*, his infinite *love*, his abounding *grace*, if the helpless, hopeless inhabitants of hell could look up to his throne and cry, There sits the Being who sent me hither: it is his fault and not mine, that instead of a tortured fiend, I am not an holy angel! Where would be his *veracity*, if the plain assertion in our text, and many others equally express, might be charged with untruth? Look over his other attributes, and you will find that in a similar manner they must all be violated by the denial of this proposition. Sinners, is it a small matter, think you, thus "to charge God foolishly;" thus blasphemously to strip him of his perfections, and represent him as a monster of injustice, of cruelty, and of falsehood?

2. After thus considering the *attributes*, attend to the word of God. What terms does it use when it speaks of his *nature*. When he makes his name known unto Moses, he proclaims; "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffer-

ing and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And elesewhere he declares, "I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." When the church of Israel worshipped him they declared, "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness." When his eternal Son would give us a true view of his Father's character, he assures us that his goodness so infinitely exceeds that of any creature, that on a comparison it may be said, "There is none good, save God." When John would teach us the nature of Him for whom his heart burned with such warm affection, he exclaims "God is love."—Now if God be to blame for the sinner's perdition, these and a thousand similar texts, are not merely unmeaning, they are false.

When God beholds sinners obstinately despising his calls, scorning his proffered grace, and rushing on to destruction, what is his language? "O that they were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!" "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" "O that thou hadst known at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboiim?" Now if God be to blame for the sinner's perdition, all these tender expostulations must be only a pompous display of unreal feelings; all these pathetic complaints must be only vain and delusive mockery.

Besides, God gives us many express and unequivocal assurances that he would "have all men to be saved;" "that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth:" and lest these assurances should not satisfy us, he has confirmed them by his oath; and "since he could swear by no greater, hath sworn by himself," saying, "As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Now if God be to blame for the sinner's perdition, these assurances and this oath must be untrue: the God of heaven must not only be a deceiver, he must also be perjured.

You shudder, my brethren, and you justly shudder at so impious a conclusion: but it is a conclusion which we must necessarily embrace, unless we maintain that the ungodly are themselves the authors and procurers of their eternal woe. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

3. From considering the word, let us pass to an examination of the conduct of God; and whether we reflect on the manner in which he has acted towards our *race in general*, or towards *each one of us in particular*, we must be convinced that if we are lost, the blame of our perdition must rest entirely on ourselves.

He created our race pure and holy, enstamped with his own image, having no criminal desires, no tendency to evil, no irregular appetites. He endued us with reason to direct our conduct, with conscience to point us to duty, with affections which could be satisfied only when fixed upon the sovereign good. He barred against us the gates to perdition; and it was man, not God, which burst open these gates to make a passage to woe. When we had thus fallen, when the flames already were kindling around us, when the curses of a violated covenant were just descending on our heads, and we could find no refuge, the Lord interposed and rescued us. Entering into a covenant of grace, he made salvation possible; he gave up the Son of his bosom to fulfil the law in our behalf, and to bear the punishment due for our sins; he offers the righteousness and merits of this Son, to all, without exception, who will accept him as their Ruler and Redeemer. The sentiments of conscience, the declarations of his word, his fearful threatenings, the instructions of the pious, the attractive displays of

heavenly glory, the dreadful denunciations of future misery, are so many mounds and barriers with which he has guarded the avenues to destruction. The transgressor must leap over these mounds before he can plunge into destruction; he must force these barriers before he can seize on death. Besides all this, God has freely offered his blessed Spirit as a safe and unerring guide to heaven to all who will ask for him sincerely, humbly, and under a sense of their need: He has caused the blood of the Saviour to flow, an ocean of mercy, between us and hell. And after thou hast done all this, O my God, shall we still dare to say that thou art the cause of our destruction? No, no: "To thee belongeth righteousness" and mercy; but to us shame and confusion of face."

After thus thinking of his conduct towards our race in general, think of his conduct *to you in particular.* How much has he done to deter you from misery, to allure you to happiness? How many times has he called to you by his providence, by his word, by his ministers, by his people, by his Spirit—how many times has he called to you in all these different manners, "Why will ye die?" Though his dealings have been diverse, yet there is not one of you to whom he has not given numerous assistances and encouragements in the path to heaven. To this person he has given a pious parent; to that a holy wife or husband; who have with earnest solicitude

and with bitter tears, besought their sinful relatives to think of the concerns of eternity. You have received from him riches and pleasures, that he might draw you through gratitude to devote yourself unto him. You have received from him disappointment, affliction, poverty, and pains, that finding no joy upon earth, you might be driven to seek spiritual pleasures. You were in imminent danger of sudden death whilst you were unprepared for it; but his providence warded of the stroke, and lengthened out your season of probation. You were brought by sickness to the borders of the grave, and standing on the brink of the pit were just ready to take the final plunge. God stretched forth from heaven the arm of his power, pulled you from the brow of the precipice, set you at a distance from it, and waited to see whether you would be instructed by the peril from which you had been delivered. My brethren, let each of you fill up this sketch for himself. Let each of you silently review the conduct of God to you, from the time that you first laid on the bosom of your mother to the present moment. Mark attentively the mercies you have received, the dangers from which you have been saved, the long-suffering compassion which has been exercised towards you, the calls and invitations of God which have sounded in your ears, the means of grace—the public instructions and the private helps which you have enjoyed, the movings of the Spirit upon your hearts inciting you to obedience. Let each of you mark these circum-

stances, and you cannot fail to be convinced, that if you perish, you must be the authors of your own perdition. "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself."

4. The *sentiments of all believers* establish this same truth. Enquire of them why they so long remained in the road to destruction: ask them whether God, or they, were to blame, that they did not sooner abandon it. They will without hesitancy reply to you, that they alone were in fault; that God invited them and was willing to receive them; but that their own obstinancy and impenitence, made them reject his invitations, and refuse to come unto him. And can it be conceived for a moment that christians of all ages, of all conditions, of all denominations, should without a single exception concur in embracing a sentiment so mortifying to the pride of human nature, unless this sentiment were established by scripture and confirmed by their own feelings?

5. Finally, remember that this testimony of believers is corroborated by the *confessions of sinners themselves*. With whatever confidence and ingenuity transgressors, while in health and strength, may assert their blamelessness; with whatever impiety and boldness they may charge God as the author of their destruction, yet their language will be changed in that honest hour when they shall have to struggle with the king of terrors. I have more than

once heard the sinner, while he supposed that death was yet at a distance from him, quieting his conscience by sophistical reasoning, and excusing himself for his continuance in guilt. I have beheld this same sinner stretched on the bed of sickness, pale, feeble, languishing, in the midst of the tears and the sighs of his relatives, expecting each moment that death would arrive to tear his unwilling soul from his body, and bear it to the tribunal of his Judge. Ah! his faltering tongue no longer dared to extenuate his crimes; his trembling lips abstained from their unholy charges against God: but shuddering and affrighted by considering the misery which awaited him, he exclaimed, "Fool that I was to have rejected an offered salvation; to have closed my ears against a wooing Redeemer; to have slighted the importunities of a compassionate God. I perish—and I perish under the agonizing reflection, that none but myself is to blame."

And could we follow sinners beyond the grave, could we behold them in their torments, and hear the sad accents which burst from their lips, with what emphasis, what energy would they confirm the truth that we are establishing. Oh! were it in their power, they would give millions of worlds to be freed from the dreadful reflection that their own folly brought them to that state of woe. This torturing remembrance, We have destroyed ourselves, preys like a serpent upon their souls, and stings them to madness.

Unite all the reflections which have been made, and you will, we trust, be convinced that *the accursed must lay all the blame of their perdition, not on God, but on themselves.*

Nevertheless, sinners object to this truth; and they found the principal of their objections on the *decrees of God*, and on *the inability of man.* We are to examine these objections in the

IId. Division of our discourse.

The first objection which the sinner makes against the doctrine that we have been establishing is this: *Since God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass, and since his decrees are irreversible, it will follow that if I am destroyed, it will be through the compulsive power of the divine decree, and not through my own fault.* On this very common objection we make the following remarks:

1. The proofs of our doctrine have been drawn from plain and simple sources: the principles on which we built our reasoning were clear; the deductions from them were intelligible, and level to the weakest capacity. But on the contrary, the objection is drawn from a subject of which we have very inadequate conceptions, in which we soon get beyond our depth, and feel ourselves involved in difficulties and darkness. Is it not then most clear

that an objection of this nature, even though it were insurmountable to us, ought nevertheless to have but little weight against such a body of clear and perspicuous evidence.

2. The principle on which this objection is founded is not a just one. What is this principle? That when two doctrines are affirmed in the scripture, which to our limited capacity appear irreconcilable, we are authorized to embrace the one and reject the other. Why is this principle unjust? Because another person on precisely the same ground may reject the doctrine which we embrace, and embrace the doctrine which we reject. Let me illustrate my meaning from the case before us. Here are two doctrines which we suppose to be taught by the scriptures: that the sinner is the author of his own perdition, and that God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass. The sinner says, I cannot reconcile these doctrines, and therefore I will reject the former. And the Arminian on precisely the same principle may say, I cannot reconcile these doctrines, and therefore I will reject the latter. Now then that cannot be a just principle, which is so vague and uncertain in its application, as to lead two different persons to conclusions and sentiments diametrically opposite.

3. Permit me again to present to you the interesting reasonings of an excellent divine on this sub-

ject.* When the sinner asserts that these two propositions, *God has irreversibly decreed whatever comes to pass*, and *the accursed can blame none but themselves for their perdition*—when the sinner asserts that these two propositions are irreconcilable, there are only two ways in which we can answer him: the first is, accurately and minutely to compare the decrees of God with the conduct and dispositions of sinners; and to make it evident from this comparison, that sinners notwithstanding these decrees have a perfect freedom of will, and are not compelled to embrace perdition: the second is, to refer this question to the decision of a Being of unsuspected knowledge and veracity, whose testimony is unexceptionable, and whose decisions are infallible. Now the first of these methods is impracticable: since we do not know the arrangement, the extent, the combinations of the decrees of God, we cannot possibly accurately compare them with human conduct. The second way is possible: There is a Being capable of deciding this point—a Being who has decided it; this Being is God, from whose decisions there can be no appeal. I will suppose you to put up this petition to God—"Doth the eternal destination which thou hast made of my soul before I had a being; do what they call in the schools predestination and reprobation, destroy this proposition—that if I perish, my destruction pro-

* This whole paragraph from Saurin.

ceeds alone from myself? My God, remove this difficulty and lay open to me this important truth." Suppose, my brethren, that having presented this question, God should answer in the following manner :—" The frailty of your minds renders this matter incomprehensible to you ; it is impossible for men finite as you are, to comprehend the whole extent of my decrees, and to see in a clear and distinct manner the influence they have on the destinies of men : but I who formed them perfectly understand them ; I am truth itself as I am wisdom ; I do declare to you then, that none of my decrees offer violence to my creatures, and that your destruction can proceed from none but yourselves. You shall one day perfectly understand what you now understand only in part ; and then you shall see with your own eyes, what you now see only with mine. Cease to anticipate a period which my wisdom defers ; and laying aside this speculation, attend to practice ; fully persuaded that you are placed between reward and punishment, and may have a part in which you please." Is it not true, my brethren, that if God had answered in this manner, it would be carrying, I do not say rashness, but insolence to the highest degree to object against this testimony, or to desire more light into this subject at present ? But God has given this answer, and in a manner infinitely more clear than we have stated it : he has given it in all those passages of his word, which attest his willingness to save man ; and therefore, notwithstanding this

objection, it still appears true that the sinner has destroyed himself.

But a second objection is urged. It is founded on *the inability of man.* "God," says the sinner, "does not deal fairly with us : he is a 'hard master, gathering where he has not strawed.' He requires of me certain duties which I cannot perform—and then because I do not perform them, sentences me to woe." This is the objection in its full force. We make but a single observation in reply to it. This inability instead of extenuating your crime is the very essence of your guilt.

Inability is of two kinds, natural and moral. Natural inability consists in a defect of rational faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages : this excuses from sin. Moral inability consists only in the want of a proper disposition of heart to use our natural ability aright : this is the essence of sin. We will illustrate this point by a familiar example. A beggar applies for relief to two different persons ; the first says to him—"I perceive your misery ; I know that you ought to be relieved, but I do not possess any property, and therefore I am totally unable to relieve you." Here is an instance of natural inability, and it perfectly exempts the person from the sin of uncharitableness. The second says to him—"I perceive your misery ; I know that you ought to be relieved ; I have a sufficiency of money ; but

I have such a dreadful hardness of heart that I cannot pity your distresses, and that I am totally unable to relieve you." Here is an instance of moral inability; instead of excusing from sin, it is that which constitutes the very essence of the sin, and which renders the man uncharitable.

Now then, sinners, let us examine under which species of inability you lie. If under the first, you are excusable; if under the second, you are inexcusable. Natural inability then consists in a defect of rational faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages. If you were without any reason to understand the truths of the gospel, without any external senses by which these truths could be conveyed to your mind, without any opportunity of ever hearing of these truths, you would not be blamable for not closing with the gospel offers of salvation. But that understanding which is employed in the investigation of natural truths, is capable of being employed in the investigation of spiritual truths; but that love which is exercised upon the creature, is capable of being exercised upon the Creator; but your outward senses and external situation are such that you have known these things: there is then no natural inability in your case; you labour only under a moral inability. The question then recurs, does this excuse you? On the contrary, it is this which constitutes your sin. Moral inability consists, as we have said, in a want of a proper disposition of heart to

use our natural ability aright—Moral inability consists in viciousness of heart and depravity of disposition. When you say therefore, "I am excusable, because I am morally unable to repent, to believe, to love God;" you say in other words, "I am excusable, because I have so dreadfully guilty and corrupted a heart, that I have no disposition to repent, to believe, to love God." What says conscience to this plea? What would a civil judge say to such an apology in the case of murder or theft? No, sinner, this impotency is so far from excusing you, that it aggravates your guilt; the greater our moral inability, the greater is our disposition to evil, and therefore the greater our crime. Notwithstanding this objection then, it still appears that the sinner destroys himself.

And now, sinners, what shall henceforth be your conduct? You have seen that if you are lost, you must voluntarily embrace perdition. Will you still act so much against the instincts of nature, so worse than brutishly as to choose destruction. Do you say, I do not choose destruction; destruction is hateful to me. In itself I grant that it is so; but he who knows that perdition is inseparably connected with any course of conduct, and yet will pursue this course of conduct, loves perdition, if not for its own sake, yet for that which is annexed to it. He that will drink a pleasant potion, though he knows it to be impregnated with poison, surely chooses

death. I affectionately and importunately beseech you not to act so cruelly to yourselves. In the name of my Master, I once more offer to you all the benefits purchased by Christ, and all the glories of heaven. If you neglect this proffer, remember that we must soon meet at the tribunal of God, and I summon this assembly then to bear testimony that you have rejected an offered Jesus.

SERMON XVIII.

LAST JUDGMENT.

REVELATIONS XX. 11, 12, 13.

"*And I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened which was the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.*"

SUCH, my brethren, are the circumstances of that final, infallible, irreversible judgment which we must all undergo. Time, as it rapidly flies, bears us nearer to this decisive bar. In a very little while, the period afforded us for preparing to appear there with joy, will be past. In a very little while our pulses will cease to throb and our hearts forget to beat. Our friends will follow our lifeless corpses to the tomb; and the dust of the church-yard shall press upon our cold and unpalpitating breasts. Even before our friends shall perform these last offices of humanity for us, and hide our corrupting bodies in the grave—our souls shall stand before the judg-

ment-seat of Christ, shall be by him acquitted or condemned, and shall enter upon their endless state. After the souls of successive generations shall have been thus acquitted or condemned, and their bodies shall have mouldered in the dust: after the period appointed from eternity for the duration of our system shall have elapsed, then the end shall come—then that general judgment will take place, which will confirm all the particular judgments before pronounced, and shew to the assembled universe the justice and mercy of the King of kings. It is this general judgment on which we are now to meditate. The Lord grant that this exercise may be so accompanied by his Spirit, that we may be enabled to stand then fearless and undaunted amidst the wreck of nature.

When the purposes of God, with respect to mankind, shall have been accomplished, then "a mighty angel shall descend from the skies, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head, and his face shining as the sun—and standing upon the sea and upon the earth, he shall lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer:" (Rev. x. 1, 5, 6.) The oath shall no sooner proceed from his lips than it shall be ratified by the God of heaven. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall resound through the universe; shall penetrate the lowest graves and the depths of the sea, and shall cause

the sleeping dust to spring into new life. At this delightful moment, light shall beam upon the tombs of the saints; for "the dead in Christ shall rise first." The particles of their frames, which in all their various changes have been preserved by omniscience, shall re-assemble at the command of God. Their bodies shall rise from the dust, clothed with new properties and with heavenly attributes, shining like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Their souls which have rested during the state of separation in the bosom of Jesus, shall rapidly fly to be re-united to their former companions, and to obtain with them the consummation of bliss. At the same instant, all the believers that are then alive upon the earth, shall be "changed in the twinkling of an eye," and caught up to meet their Saviour. The righteous being thus collected, the loud peal of the trump shall again float on the air, shake the earth to its centre, and re-echo through the dreary abodes of hell. The ungodly well know the portentous sound; and shuddering, trembling, and unwilling, rise from the dust; whilst their souls are dragged from the place of torment to meet those bodies once partakers of their sin, now to be partakers of their punishment. Thus united, they, with the sinners that are upon the earth, are borne through the air to meet their offended Lord. All mankind being thus assembled, the loud clangour of the trump again is heard, and re-echoes round the extensive vaults of heaven. Hell vomits forth its victims, and the

apostate spirits, with satan at their head, are dragged, oh! how reluctantly! to the dreadful bar.—Thus two worlds are collected to be judged; and the third is advancing as an assistant spectator.

Whilst these preparations are making, the Judge approaches. At the brightness of his presence, the sun hides its beams and shrouds itself in darkness. It covered itself with sack-cloth when the humbled Jesus expired upon Calvary; it starts back with astonishment and terrour when he comes in the splendour of his glory. The moon lays aside its brilliancy and changes into blood: why should it continue to measure times and seasons when eternity commences? The stars of heaven shake and fall from their spheres; the expiring earth trembles in mighty throes and convulsions, and is enwrapped in flames; the heavens shrink like a shrivelled scroll from the face of their Creator.

In the midst of circumstances so august and terrible, the Judge descends. This Judge is Jesus Christ, to whom according to the appointment of the most sacred Trinity this sublime office is made appropriate—Jesus Christ, who being both God and man, is properly constituted the Judge between God and man; Jesus Christ who is our owner as Creator, our purchaser as Redeemer, and therefore has a just authority to judge us by both these titles. With what lustre and glory this Saviour now ap-

pears! how different from the despised Nazarene! Instead of the manger at Bethlehem, he sits on the throne of the universe; instead of the humble son of Mary, he comes as the eternal son of God; instead of a few swaddling cloths as the sign of his advent, the sun eclipsed and the moon darkened precede his appearance; instead of appearing in the silence of midnight, he comes in the midst of thunders and lightnings and dissolving systems; instead of being unjustly cited to a criminal bar, he summons the whole world to answer to him; instead of the crown of thorns, he bears one beaming with glory; instead of the insulting reed, the emblem of mock-majesty, he wields the sceptre of the universe; instead of being surrounded by a reviling crowd who pour upon him their reproaches, their contumelies, their curses, he is attended by myriads of the angelic host who prostrate themselves before him, blessing him for his mercies and adoring him for his perfections.

Such is the appearance of the Judge—He comes dressed in that body which was crucified on Calvary, and which now inconceivably glorified and exalted, is taken into union with divinity, and remains in heaven the eternal monument of redeeming love. In this he comes to decide the destinies of men. The prints of the nails, of the thorns, of the spear, still are manifest, and a flood of glory beams from these precious wounds. O joyful spectacle to the

righteous, who see in the sufferings of which these wounds are the memorial, the remission of their sins! O terrible view to the wicked who have crucified to themselves afresh the Son of God, and trampled upon his sacred blood!

Such will be the aspect of the Judge. He shall be seated, the apostle tells us, "upon *a great white throne.*" His judgment-seat is denominated a *throne*, to express his supreme power, and to shew that there can be no appeal from his decision to a higher tribunal. It is called a *white* throne to denote the bright glory, the illustrious light, the unspotted purity, and the awful holiness of him that sits upon it. The Judge then being seated, and all the dead small and great standing before him, "the books are opened." This is a figurative expression, the import of which is however very plain. The book of *divine omniscience* shall be unfolded, and display to every individual of the vast assembly, all the thoughts, words and actions of himself and others: The book of *conscience* will attest the accuracy of this record: The books of *nature*, of the *law*, and of the *gospel*, shall be expanded, that by them our conduct may be tried: and finally, "the book of *life*" will be unclosed, which contains the names of all those who, according to the divine declarations, have a title to the heavenly inheritance.

Every thing being thus prepared, the Judge sum-

mons the righteous to the tribunal; and as they were raised, so they will be judged first, in order that they may then be assessors with Jesus Christ in judging men and angels. (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.)

It is a question on which divines are divided whether the *sins* of the pious shall be publickly proclaimed and manifested in the great day. From the near relations that Jesus sustains to his people, and the tender love he bears to them; from the account of the proceedings in the judgment, which he has given us in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, and in which the *good deeds* of the righteous alone are mentioned; from God's promising to "blot out the transgressions" of his people, and to "remember their sins no more," (Is. xliii. 25) to "cast them into the depth of the sea, and behind his back;" (Mic. vii. 18. Is. xxxviii. 17.)—from the exalted joy and unmingled triumph that the saints will feel on that day; from these and similar considerations, some have concluded, that none of the offences of the justified will be mentioned. Others however supposing that, from the feebleness of our powers and the narrowness of our views, we cannot tell how infinite love, directed by infinite wisdom and aiming at the everlasting good of the universe, will be exercised towards us; considering the description of the judgment given by the Saviour as containing only the great outline of those solemn trans-

actions; interpreting the promises of God only as an engagement that the iniquities of his people should not be remembered to their condemnation; relying on those numerous texts which declare that all our actions upon the earth shall then be manifested; thinking that a full display of the divine grace and power in the salvation of rebels, would render a view of their former conduct and feelings requisite; knowing that in heaven the redeemed remember their sins without impairing their bliss, and by the recollection of them feel more their obligations to redeeming love:—others, for these reasons suppose that the iniquities of the children of Jesus will be exhibited, not to fill them with misery, but to make them rise higher in their admiration of that mercy which plucked them as brands from the everlasting burnings. Such a view would inspire them with sentiments similar, but far superior to those which Paul so often expresses, when assured of the love of his Redeemer, yet recalling his crimes, his overflowing heart labours in vain to declare all the emotions of gratitude, all the ardours of love with which it is penetrated and inflamed.

But whatever we may think on this question, it is certain that their *good deeds* are recorded in the book of remembrance, and will be proclaimed to the universe; not as the ground of their acceptance, for the only plea for justification which a sinner can

offer is the blood of Jesus; but as the evidence of their union to Christ, as the fruits of the Spirit dwelling within them, and as the measure of their future glory. Then every penitential tear that they have shed, every groan over their corruption that they have uttered, every act of faith, every sigh after heaven, every work of charity, every emotion of love, every trait of obedience, every exercise of zeal, every holy duty, every suffering they have undergone for their Lord, every renunciation of sinful enjoyments, every conflict with their spiritual foes, will be manifested to the vast assembly of men, angels, and devils. Then the mouths of those who once derided them, and treated them as hypocrites or fanatics, shall be closed, and it will evidently appear that, with all their lamented imperfections, they were the faithful followers of the Lamb.

Their piety being thus made so manifest that the most malignant are forced to acknowledge it, the Judge turns to them, and with infinite benignity and love addresses them, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In vain shall we attempt to conceive the transports which will swell their breasts at this acquittal by their beloved and almighty Redeemer. "What!" they exclaim in extacy, "What! are we indeed declared by our Saviour to be blest! we, who

deserved everlasting perdition; we, against whom the thunders of the law had been directed; we, whose destruction was sought by satan, sin, and the world; we, who so long resisted the efforts of mercy and who lived so far below our duty and our engagements even after we had fled for refuge to the cross; we, whose eyes have often been filled with tears and whose hearts have often trembled with apprehension lest we should not stand the scrutiny of this solemn day. But now our last tear has been shed; never shall our heart again tremble, except with gratitude and joy. We shall forever dwell in the palace of the King of kings, enjoying our God without a possibility of being separated from him. We shall forever behold the face of our blessed Redeemer smiling upon us, and taste that fullness of pleasures which is at his right hand forever more. From our full hearts even now shall burst that song, which will be ever continued and ever new—Glory, infinite and eternal, to that grace which hath crowned us with such unmerited mercies."

The righteous being thus openly acquitted and acknowledged by their Lord, and a manifestation of the propriety of his conduct in raising them to glory having been made to all the spectators, he will next prove to the assembled universe, and to sinners themselves, his justice in condemning them to eternal perdition. The books are again opened, and all

the iniquities of the open sinner and unfruitful professor are fully revealed. On earth they can delude themselves into a belief that their hearts are not opposed to God; that by nature they are not so unholy as the scriptures represent; that their crimes have been few and venial. But then God by a forced conviction will shew them their true character; will cause them to feel that their hearts were full of iniquity, that their affections were totally alienated from him, and that they were enemies to him by wicked works. However ingenious they now are in blinding and deceiving themselves, God in an instant will convince them of their deep pollution, and their full desert of hell. The flames that are prepared for the ungodly will not only scorch, but enlighten the impious, and teach them the demerit of sin and the holiness of God; and the splendours of divine justice and purity with which they will be encompassed, will make them shudder at their character and their doom.

But it is necessary for the vindication of the justice of God, that not only they, but also the spectators, have this conviction. The Judge will therefore compel them to confess what they feel in their hearts, and openly to bewail their folly in continuing in sin and despising the proffered grace of God. In the agony of their souls they shall cry—"Oh that we had been wise, and lived in the believing prospect of this awful day! Cursed be those sins in which

we indulged, and for which we sacrificed our God, our Redeemer, our souls, our everlasting felicity! Oh that we could cease to exist, or could comfort ourselves in the midst of the flames by the reflection that our sufferings were undeserved, and inflicted only by an arbitrary tyrant! but this consolation is denied us; for we feel, we confess, that our condemnation will be just."

Innumerable witnesses will also be produced to shew the guilt of the unrighteous. All the ministers of the Lord Jesus, who once pointed them to the cross, and expostulated with them on the folly and madness of their conduct, and told them of the infinite mercy of God and the riches of grace in the Saviour, and exhibited to them the glories of heaven, the pains of hell, the solemnities of judgment, and prayed and wept over them—will then be obliged to testify that they wilfully rejected offered mercy and everlasting salvation.——All their pious friends and relatives, whose hearts they so deeply wounded on earth by their forgetfulness of God and their eternal destination, will then lift up their voices for the condemnation of those to whom they were once so tenderly attached. The parent will testify against that ungrateful child whom he now loves as himself, and for whose neglect of his pious admonitions and entreaties, his "soul now weeps in secret places." The husband will testify against that wife to whom he is united by the tenderest af-

fection, who shares his earthly cares and joys, but who is deaf to his solicitations to form ties for eternity. The wife shall testify against that thoughtless husband, who disregards her gentle but warm and heart-felt supplications, that he will have mercy on his soul. In one word, all the children of God will be compelled to bear witness against those to whom they were connected by the most tender and endearing human bonds, but who persisted in remaining the enemies of Jesus.——The persons whom they have injured will testify against them. The blood of Abel shall still cry against Cain; and that of Naboth against Ahab. Drusilla will imprecate the divine vengeance against Felix; and the unwary who have been seduced by the conversation or the writings of the libertine and the infidel, will declare their guilt. The poor whom they have suffered to perish, the afflicted whom they would not comfort, the persecuted whom they would not defend, the widow and the orphan whom they would not console, will proclaim these neglected duties.——Even inanimate things will testify against them. The sacred desks where the truths of religion have been announced, the temples dedicated to the Lord in which they heard of the dying love and the everlasting righteousness of Jesus, the baptismal founts over which they were devoted to the Sacred Trinity, the sacramental tables which they have despised or profaned, the temporal enjoyments which they have abused to sin, the places

where their iniquities and their deeds of darkness were committed—all these will be " swift witnesses against them."——The angels of God will testify against them. They will declare that these guilty men rejected their ministrations and gave themselves up to the controul of evil spirits.—— Satan, who now tempts them, will testify against them: He now watches them; he seduces them into guilt, and he will well remember their crimes, and declare them then with a malicious joy.—— The Spirit of God will testify that he often moved upon their hearts, and by his secret suggestions and influences wooed them to abandon their iniquities and turn to the Lord; but that they grieved, resisted, and quenched him, and chose rather to comply with the temptations of the devil than with his incitements.

Unhappy men! what will you do, where will you hide your blushing heads, when such a crowd of witnesses appear against you?—But there is still another witness: it is your Judge himself; who, opening the book of remembrance, will shew to you and to the vast assembly, every unholy thought, every irregular desire, every criminal motive, every impure wish, every unhallowed design, every libertine, slanderous or blasphemous word, every mercy that was abused, every judgment that was contemned, every duty that was omitted, every warning that was despised, every sin of others pro-

duced by your conduct, every work done in secret or at midnight, and seen by no eye but that of God. Millions of crimes which had never been observed, or were long since forgotten, will be then remembered, will shew the deep guilt of your souls, and the terribleness of that punishment which awaits you.—Unhappy men! thus shall you stand, in vain "calling upon the rocks and the mountains to fall upon you and hide you from the wrath of the Lamb," the injured, insulted Lamb of God. The saints will view you as the enemies of their Lord. Though they now weep over you, yet they then will adore the just judgments of God. It is the same Abraham that interceded for Sodom, who refuses to listen to the supplications of the rich man in the flames. The damned will regard you with malicious triumph, as condemned to the same everlasting torments with them. The devils who now tempt you will laugh you to scorn for having listened to their delusions, and will rejoice as the fierce executioners of God's wrath forever to glut their fury upon you. Your Judge will then turn upon you his eyes burning with indignation, and pronounce upon you that decisive sentence—"Depart from me, and from all hope of future joy: depart, bearing the curse of Him who shed his blood to redeem you, who made you the offer of salvation, and importunately besought you to accept it: you have despised this blood and scorned this offer; depart then into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Sinners, where will you then look for succour? Above you, will be the God, who now "calls while ye refuse; who now stretches out his arms, while ye regard not; but who then will laugh at your calamity, and mock at your fear." (Prov. i. 24—26.) With him will be seated those saints with whom you now refuse to associate, but whom you shall then behold possessed of a glory and felicity from which you shall be eternally excluded. Around you, will be none but the sharers of your guilt and the partakers of your punishment. Below you, will be only the dreadful glare of the flames in which you must forever abide. Within you, will be a forced illumination which will torture you by compelling you to feel that your condemnation is just, that you have drawn down this vengeance upon yourselves. Wherever you cast your eyes, you will behold nothing which will not fill you with horrour.

Miserable souls! what will ye do? In vain will you cry—"Spare us, O Lord; spare us for a little time: suffer us again to live; again to pass our period of trial; and then we will live to thee and renounce the world and sin." Alas! these supplications will be useless! "Remember," your Judge will reply, "remember that I once entreated and wooed you by motives tender as my dying love, awful as eternity; and you would not listen. Tears, supplications, prayers, are now useless, for justice is inexorable: depart from me, ye workers of iniqui-

ty." The sentence is fulfilled; heaven vanishes from their eyes; hell gapes to receive them; their shrieks vibrate on the ears of the redeemed as they rise with their Saviour to glory; and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever."

And now, my brethren, in concluding this discourse, let us seriously enquire if we are prepared for this judgment-day? If the last trumpet were this moment to sound, if "the sign of the Son of man" were now to appear in the heavens, if the angels who shall attend our Judge were now to display themselves to us, tell me, or rather answer to your own consciences, what would be your emotions? Would this sacred place resound with that cry of joy—"Let us go out to meet our Saviour;" or should we not rather hear that agonizing exclamation,—"Whither shall we go from his presence? Whither shall we flee from his vengeance? Mountains and rocks, fall upon us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb."

Oh! let us in time secure an acquittal in this "great day for which all other days were made." By embracing the salvation offered through the atonement of Jesus, by the cultivation of every grace, and the practice of every virtue, let us prepare to appear before the judgment bar with confidence. Let us keep the remembrance of these awful scenes which we are to behold, ever fresh

upon our hearts. This remembrance will powerfully deter us from sin, stimulate us to the discharge of duty, elevate us above the world, cause us to avoid all dissimulation and deceit, and induce us thoroughly to search our hearts and to try the foundation of our hopes.

Impenitent men, we weep when we look on you, and see you abusing the patience and long-suffering of God, as encouragements to persevere in guilt. The divine forbearance will not forever endure. Think, solemnly think, of that tremendous day, when if you remain in your present condition, you shall hear a sentence of perdition from the lips of the compassionate Saviour, and be blasted to the abyss by the thunders which issue from his throne.

Blessed be God, it is not yet too late for you to avoid this fearful destiny—Your life is still preserved—mercy is still proffered to you. Flee then to the great Redeemer, who is still waiting to be gracious unto you; to the fountain of his blood, to the throne of his grace. He still extends his arms to embrace you—he still entreats, beseeches, importunes you to turn and live; he still gives you his promises to allure you; his ministers to call you; his Spirit to excite you: he still stands before the throne of the Eternal Father, presenting to him the sacrifice of Calvary, and interceding for you: he still cries unto you, "Why, why will ye die."

Can you resist longer these condescending exhortations, intreaties, importunities of the Son of God? I beseech you no longer to refuse admission to the Saviour thus standing and knocking at the door of your hearts. He offers himself to you as your redeemer and portion; receive the divine offer humbly, thankfully, joyfully. I adjure you thus to act: I adjure you by the love and terrors of the Lord; by the solemnities of the day of judgment; by a regard to the eternal destinations of your souls. Flee to the blood of Jesus for the remission of your iniquities; to the righteousness of Jesus for the justification of your persons; to the grace of Jesus for power to resist sin; to the blessed Spirit of Jesus as a fountain of holiness and happiness. Thus shall your life be peace, your eternity joy: you shall appear without dismay at his bar, and be admitted by him to that kingdom of glory where you shall sing, with the heavenly host, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

FINIS.